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The
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Series

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NICHOLAS NICKLEBY
AND MR. SQUEERS

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THE BRIDGE SERIES

GENERAL EDITOR: J. A. BRIGHT, B.A.

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY AND MR SQUEERS

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

OLIVER TWIST

THREE ONE-ACT PLAYS

POWER AND PROGRESS

WAYS OF THE WORLD

CHANGING HORIZONS

THE MYSTERIOUS UNIVERSE

CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY

THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON

ANIMAL FARM

THE KON-TIKI EXPEDITION

THE GRAND BABYLON HOTEL

THE CARD

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

MANKIND AGAINST THE KILLERS

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THE HOPKINS MANUSCRIPT

STORIES GRIM, STORIES GAY

THE 'CAINE' MUTINY

LUCKY JIM

THE JOURNEYING BOY

CHRISTMAS AT CANDLESHOE

BARCHESTER TOWERS

FLOWERS FOR MRS HARRIS

AMERICAN SHORT STORIES

STORIES FROM MANY LANDS

THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY AND MR. SQUEERS

From *Nicholas Nickleby*
by
CHARLES DICKENS

Abridged and slightly simplified
by
J. A. BRIGHT

Illustrated
by
J. S. GOODALL

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The *Bridge Series* offers interesting reading matter for the students of English as a second or foreign language who have reached a stage between the graded supplementary reader and full English. Having enjoyed a number of books in the *Simplified English Series* such a student is ready for something more challenging.

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PREFACE

TO THE PUBLISHER,

SIR,

When schoolmasters like me write a preface to a book, they do it to tell young people what to think. I do not want to do this; I would rather let them find out for themselves what Dickens had in his mind when he wrote, what he thought was right and what wrong, the kind of people he liked and the kind he hated. Let them read the book, and think what they like. There is only one thing I hope they will not think, and that is that they are reading about England to-day instead of about England over a hundred years ago.

If they want details of his life, they can go to an encyclopedia. If they want to meet the man, they cannot do better than read his books, and decide for themselves if they like him.

I have provided a glossary which I hope hardly anyone will need to use. You cannot expect me to write a preface as well. If you must have one, you may publish this: it is all there is.

J.A.B.

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CHAPTER I

Introduces all the rest

THERE once lived, in a lonely part of Devonshire, one Mr. Godfrey Nickleby: a worthy gentleman, who, taking it into his head rather late in life that he must get married, and not being young enough or rich enough to hope for the hand of a lady of fortune, had married a former sweetheart out of mere attachment, who in her turn had taken him for the same reason.

He and his partner, the honeymoon being over, looked sadly out into the world, trusting no little to chance for the improvement of their means. Mr. Nickleby's income, at the time of his marriage, varied between sixty and eighty pounds a year.

There are people enough in the world, heaven knows, and even in London, where Mr. Nickleby lived in those days, but few complaints prevail of the population being scarce. It is extraordinary how long a man may look among the crowd without discovering the face of a friend, but it is no less true. Mr. Nickleby looked and looked, till his eyes became sore as his heart, but no friend appeared; and when, growing tired of the search, he turned his eyes homeward, he saw very little there to relieve his weary vision.

At length, after five years, when Mrs. Nickleby had presented her husband with a couple of sons, and that embarrassed gentleman, impressed with the necessity of providing for his family, was seriously turning over in his mind a way of making money by insuring his life the next quarter day,

and then falling from the top of the Monument¹ by accident, there came, one morning, by the general post, a black-bordered letter to inform him how his uncle, Mr. Ralph Nickleby, was dead, and had left him the greater part of his little property, amounting in all to five thousand pounds.

Mr. Godfrey Nickleby could, at first, scarcely believe the news thus given to him. On examination, however, it turned out to be exactly correct. The kindly old gentleman, it seemed, had intended to leave the whole to the Royal Humane Society, and had indeed made a will to that effect; but the society, having been unfortunate enough, a few weeks before, to save the life of a poor relation to whom he paid a weekly allowance of three shillings and sixpence, he had, in a fit of very natural anger, altered his will, and left it all to Mr. Godfrey Nickleby, with a special mention of his indignation, not only against the society for saving the poor relation's life, but against the poor relation also, for allowing himself to be saved.

With a part of this property Mr. Godfrey Nickleby purchased a small farm, near Dawlish in Devonshire, where he retired with his wife and two children, to live upon the best interest he could get for the rest of his money, and the little produce he could raise from his land. The two did so well together that when he died, some fifteen years after this period, and some five after his wife, he was enabled to leave to his eldest son, Ralph, three thousand pounds in ready money, and to his youngest son, Nicholas, one thousand and the farm, which was as small a landed estate as one would desire to see.

These two brothers had been brought up together at a school in Exeter; and, being accustomed to go home once a week, had often heard, from their mother's lips, long

¹ The Monument: a very tall memorial near London Bridge built in memory of the great fire of 1666 that started on that spot and burnt the greater part of London.

accounts of their father's sufferings in his days of poverty, and of their dead uncle's importance in his days of wealth: which stories produced a very different impression on the two: for, while the younger, who was of a timid and retiring character, got from them nothing but warnings to avoid the great world and attach himself to the quiet way of life in the country, Ralph, the elder, gathered from the often-repeated tale the two great morals that riches are the only true source of happiness and power, and that it is lawful and just to acquire them by all means short of crime. "And," reasoned Ralph with himself, "if no good came of my uncle's money while he was alive, a great deal of good came of it after he was dead, since my father has got it now, and is saving it up for me, which is a highly virtuous purpose; and, going back to the old gentleman, good *did* come of it to him too, for he had the pleasure of thinking of it all his life long, and of being envied and courted by all his family besides." And Ralph always finished his thinking by arriving at the conclusion, that there was nothing like money.

Not confining himself to theory, or permitting his brains to idle, even at that early age, in mere ideas, this promising youngster became a money-lender on a limited scale at school; putting out at good interest a small capital of pencils and balls, and gradually extending his operations until they reached up to the copper coins of this country, in which he speculated to considerable advantage. Nor did he trouble his borrowers with difficult calculations of figures, or references to ready-reckoners; his simple rule of interest being all included in the one golden sentence "two-pence for every half-penny," which greatly simplified the accounts, and which, as a simple rule, more easily learnt and kept in the memory than any known rule of arithmetic, cannot be too strongly recommended to the notice of capitalists, both large and small, and more especi-

ally of money-lenders. Indeed, to do them justice, many of them are to this day in the frequent habit of adopting it, with great success.

In like manner, did young Ralph Nickleby avoid all those difficult and complicated calculations of odd days, which no one who has worked sums in simple interest can fail to have found most embarrassing, by establishing the one general rule that all sums of principal and interest should be paid on pocket-money day, that is to say, on Saturday: and that whether a loan were made on the Monday, or on the Friday, the amount of interest should be, in both cases, the same. Indeed, he argued, and with great show of reason, that it ought to be rather more for one day than for five, since the borrower might in the former case be very fairly supposed to be in great difficulty, otherwise he would not borrow at all with such odds against him. The fact is interesting, as showing the secret connection and sympathy which always exists between great minds. Though Master Ralph Nickleby was not at the time aware of it, the money-lenders mentioned just now, work on just the same principle in all their business.

From what we have said of this young gentleman, and the natural admiration the reader will immediately feel for his character, it may perhaps be expected that he is to be the hero of the work which we shall presently begin. To set this point at rest for once and for ever we hasten to undeceive them, and stride to its beginning.

On the death of his father, Ralph Nickleby, who had been some time before placed in a business company in London, applied himself passionately to his old pursuit of money-getting, in which he speedily became so buried, that he quite forgot his brother for many years; and if, at times, a recollection of his old playfellow broke upon him through the mist in which he lived—for gold surrounds a man with mist, more destructive of all his old senses and deadening

to his feelings than the gas from charcoal—it brought along with it a companion thought, that if they were intimate he would want to borrow money of him. So Mr. Ralph Nickleby shrugged his shoulders and said things were better as they were.

As for Nicholas, he lived a single man on the family estate until he grew tired of living alone, and then he took to wife the daughter of a neighbouring gentleman with a fortune of one thousand pounds. This good lady bore him two children, a son and a daughter, and when the son was about nineteen and the daughter fourteen, as near as we can guess—impartial records of young ladies' ages being, before the passing of the new act, nowhere preserved in the records of this country—Mr. Nickleby looked about him for the means of recovering his capital, now sadly reduced by this increase in his family, and the expenses of their education.

“Speculate with it,” said Mrs. Nickleby.

“Spec-u-late, my dear?” said Mr. Nickleby, as if in doubt.

“Why not?” asked Mrs. Nickleby.

“Because, my dear, if we *should* lose it,” replied Mr. Nickleby, who was a slow and time-taking speaker, “if we *should* lose it, we shall no longer be able to live, my dear.”

“Nonsense,” said Mrs. Nickleby.

“I am not altogether sure of that, my dear,” said Mr. Nickleby.

“There’s Nicholas,” pursued the lady, “quite a young man—it’s time he was in the way of doing something for himself; and Kate too, poor girl, without a penny in the world. Think of your brother! Would he be what he is if he hadn’t speculated?”

“That’s true,” replied Mr. Nickleby. “Very good, my dear. Yes. I will speculate, my dear.”

Speculation is a round game; the players see little or

nothing of their cards at first starting; gains *may* be great—and so may losses. The run of luck went against Mr. Nickleby. Everybody was paying very high prices for shares, the bubble burst, four stockbrokers fled from England, four hundred nobodies were ruined, and among them Mr. Nickleby.

“The very house I live in,” sighed the poor gentleman, “may be taken from me to-morrow. Not an article of my old furniture, but will be sold to strangers!”

The last idea hurt him so much, that he took at once to his bed; apparently determined to keep that, at all events.

“Cheer up, sir,” said the doctor.

“You mustn’t let yourself be made unhappy, sir,” said the nurse.

“Such things happen every day,” remarked the lawyer.

“And it is very wrong to rebel against them,” whispered the clergyman.

“And what no man with a family ought to do,” added the neighbours.

Mr. Nickleby shook his head, and motioning them all out of the room, embraced his wife and children, and having pressed them by turns to his feebly beating heart, sank exhausted on his pillow. They were sorry to find that his reason went astray after this; for he spoke for a long time about the generosity and goodness of his brother, and the merry old times when they were at school together. This fit of wandering passed, he solemnly commended them to One who never deserted the widow or her fatherless children, and, smiling gently on them, turned upon his face and observed that he thought he could fall asleep.

CHAPTER II

Of Mr. Ralph Nickleby, and his house, and his undertakings.

MR. RALPH NICKLEBY was not, strictly speaking, what you would call a merchant, neither was he a banker or a lawyer. He was certainly not a tradesman, and still less could he lay any claim to the title of a professional gentleman; for it would have been impossible to mention any recognized profession to which he belonged. Nevertheless as he lived in a spacious house in Golden Square, which, in addition to a brass plate upon the street door, had another brass plate two sizes and a half smaller upon the left-hand door-post, over a brass model of a child's hand and displaying the word "Office," it was clear that Mr. Ralph Nickleby did, or pretended to do, business of some kind; and the fact, if it required any further proof, was plainly shown by the daily attendance, between the hours of half-past nine and five, of a yellow-faced man in rusty brown, who sat upon an uncommonly hard stool in a little room at the end of the passage, and always had a pen behind his ear when he answered the bell.

Although a few members of the graver professions live about Golden Square, it is not exactly in anybody's way to or from anywhere. It is one of the squares that have been; a quarter of the town that has gone down in the world, and taken to letting lodgings. Many of its first and second floors are let, furnished, to single gentlemen; and it takes boarders besides. It is very popular with foreigners. The dark-skinned men who wear large rings, and heavy watch chains, and bushy whiskers, and who gather under the Opera Colonnade, and about the box office in the season,

between four and five in the afternoon, when they give away the free tickets—all live in Golden Square, or within a street of it. Two or three violins and a wind instrument from the opera band live within its limits. Its boarding-houses are musical, and the notes of pianos and harps float in the evening time round the head of the mournful statue, guarding a little desert of bushes, in the centre of the square. On a summer's night, windows are thrown open, and groups of black-moustached men are seen by the passer-by, lounging at the windows and smoking fearfully. Sounds of deep voices practising singing invade the evening's silence; and the smoke of choice tobacco scents the air.

This would not seem a spot very well suited to the doing of business; but Mr. Ralph Nickleby had lived there, nevertheless, for many years, and uttered no complaint of that kind. He knew nobody round about, and nobody knew him, although he enjoyed the reputation of being immensely rich. The tradesmen held that he was a sort of lawyer, and the other neighbours thought that he was a kind of general agent; both of which guesses were as correct and exact as guesses about other people's affairs usually are, or need to be.

Mr. Ralph Nickleby sat in his office one morning, ready dressed to walk outside. He wore a short green jacket over a blue coat; a white waistcoat, grey mixture trousers, and long boots drawn over them. A bit of his shirt struggled out, as if insisting on showing itself, from between his chin and the top button of his jacket; and the latter garment was not made low enough to conceal a long gold watch chain, composed of a series of plain rings, which had its beginning at the handle of a gold repeater in Mr. Nickleby's pocket, and its end in two little keys; one belonging to the watch itself, and the other to some special lock. He wore a sprinkling of powder upon his head, as if to make himself look benevolent; but if that were his purpose, he

would perhaps have done better to powder his face also, for there was something in its very wrinkles, and in his cold restless eye, which seemed to tell of cunning that would announce itself in spite of him. However this might be, there he was, and as he was all alone, neither the powder, nor the wrinkles, nor the eyes, had the smallest effect, good or bad, upon anybody just then, and are consequently no business of ours just now.

Mr. Nickleby closed an account-book which lay on his desk, and, throwing himself back in his chair, gazed with an air of thoughtfulness through the dirty window. Some London houses have an unhappy little piece of ground behind them, usually shut in by four high whitewashed walls, and frowned upon by hundreds of chimneys; in which there withers on, from year to year, a crippled tree, that makes a show of putting forth a few leaves late in autumn when other trees lose theirs, and, drooping in the effort, lingers on, all cracked and smoke-dried, till the following season, when it repeats the same process, and perhaps if the weather is particularly pleasant, even tempts some diseased sparrow to chirp in its branches. People sometimes call these dark yards "gardens"; it is not supposed that they were ever planted, but rather that they are pieces of unreclaimed land, with the withered vegetation of the original brick-field. No man thinks of walking in this desolate place, or of turning it to any account. A few old baskets, half a dozen broken bottles, and such-like rubbish, may be thrown there, when the tenant first moves in, but nothing more; and there they remain until he goes away again; the damp straw taking just as long to rot as it thinks proper: and mixing with the thin shrubs, and miserable everbrowns,¹ and broken flower-pots, that are scattered mournfully about—a prey to "blacks" and dirt.

¹ everbrowns: trees and bushes that keep their leaves all the year are usually called evergreens.

It was into a place of this kind that Mr. Nickleby gazed, as he sat with his hands in his pockets looking out of the window. He had fixed his eyes upon a twisted tree, planted by some former tenant in a barrel, that had once been green, and left there, years before, to rot away piece by piece. There was nothing very inviting in the object, but Mr. Nickleby was lost in his thoughts, and sat contemplating it with far greater attention than, in a more conscious mood, he would have condescended to give to the rarest of flowers. At length, his eyes wandered to a little dirty window on the left, through which the face of the clerk was dimly visible; that worthy chancing to look up, he signed to him to attend.

In obedience to this signal the clerk got off the high stool (to which he had given a high polish by countless gettings off and on), and presented himself in Mr. Nickleby's room. He was a tall man of middle age, with two prominent eyes of which one was a fixture, a red nose, a face like a corpse, and a suit of clothes (if the word be allowable when they suited him not at all) much the worse for wear, very much too small, and placed upon such a short allowance of buttons that it was marvellous how he managed to keep them on.

"Was that half-past twelve, Noggs?" said Mr. Nickleby, in a sharp, harsh voice.

"Not more than five-and-twenty minutes by the—" Noggs was going to add public-house clock, but remembering said instead "regular time."

"My watch has stopped," said Mr. Nickleby; "I don't know from what cause."

"Not wound up," said Noggs.

"Yes it is," said Mr. Nickleby.

"Over-wound then," answered Noggs.

"That can't very well be," observed Mr. Nickleby.

"Must be," said Noggs.



"My watch has stopped," said Mr. Nickleby

"Well," said Mr. Nickleby, putting the watch back in his pocket, "perhaps it is."

Noggs gave a peculiar grunt, as was his custom at the end of all arguments with his master, to suggest that he (Noggs) had won; and (as he rarely spoke to anybody unless somebody spoke to him) fell into a grim silence, and rubbed his hands slowly over each other: cracking the joints of his fingers, and squeezing them into all possible strange shapes. The unceasing performance of this on every occasion, and the giving of a fixed sightless look to his good eye, so as to make it the same as the other, and to make it impossible for anybody to decide where or at what he was looking, were two among the numerous peculiarities of Mr. Noggs, which struck an inexperienced observer at first sight.

"I am going to the London Tavern this morning," said Mr. Nickleby.

"Public meeting?" inquired Noggs.

Mr. Nickleby nodded. "I expect a letter from the lawyer about that mortgage of Ruddle's. If it comes at all, it will be here by the two o'clock delivery. I shall leave the city about that time and walk to Charing Cross on the left-hand side of the way; if there are any letters, come and meet me, and bring them with you."

Noggs nodded; and as he nodded there came a ring at the office bell. The master looked up from his papers, and the clerk calmly remained standing still.

"The bell," said Noggs, as though in explanation. "At home?"

"Yes."

"To anybody?"

"Yes."

"To the tax-gatherer?"

"No! Let him call again."

Noggs gave his usual grunt, as much as to say, "I

thought so!" and, the ring being repeated, went to the door, whence he presently returned, showing in, by the name of Mr. Bonney, a pale gentleman in a violent hurry, who, with his hair standing up in great disorder all over his head, and a very narrow white necktie tied loosely round his throat, looked as if he had been knocked up in the night, and had not dressed himself since.

"My dear Nickleby," said the gentleman, taking off a white hat which was so full of papers that it would scarcely stick upon his head, "there's not a moment to lose; I have a cab at the door. Sir Matthew Pupker takes the chair, and three members of Parliament are positively coming. I have seen two of them safely out of bed. The third, who was at Crockford's¹ all night, has just gone home to put a clean shirt on, and take a bottle or two of soda water, and will certainly be with us, in time to address the meeting. He is a little excited by last night, but never mind that; he always speaks the stronger for it."

"It seems to promise pretty well," said Mr. Ralph Nickleby, whose deliberate manner was strongly opposed to the liveliness of the other man of business.

"Pretty well!" echoed Mr. Bonney. "It's the finest idea that was ever started. 'United Metropolitan Improved Hot Bun and Cake Baking and Punctual Delivery Company. Capital, five millions, in five hundred thousand shares of ten pounds each.' Why the very name will put the price of the shares up in ten days."

"And when they are up," said Mr. Ralph Nickleby, smiling.

"When they are, you know what to do with them as well as any man alive, and how to back quietly out at the right time," said Mr. Bonney, slapping the capitalist familiarly on the shoulder. "By the bye, what a *very* remarkable man that clerk of yours is."

¹ Crockford's: London Club

"Yes, poor devil!" replied Ralph, drawing on his gloves, "Though Newman Noggs kept his horses and hounds once."

"Aye, aye?" said the other carelessly.

"Yes," continued Ralph, "and not many years ago either; but he wasted his money, invested it anyhow, borrowed at interest, and in short made first a thorough fool of himself and then a beggar. He took to drinking, and had a serious illness, and then came here to borrow a pound, as in his better days I had——"

"Done business with him," said Mr. Bonney with a meaning look.

"Just so," replied Ralph; "I couldn't lend it, you know."

"Oh, of course not."

"But as I wanted a clerk just then, to open the door and so forth, I took him out of charity, and he has remained with me ever since. He is a little mad, I think," said Mr. Nickleby, calling up a charitable look, "but he is useful enough, poor creature, useful enough."

The kind-hearted gentleman omitted to add that Newman Noggs, being utterly penniless, served him for rather less than the usual wages of a boy of thirteen; and also failed to mention in his hasty account, that his unusually silent character made him an especially valuable person in a place where much business was done, of which it was desirable no mention should be made out of doors. The other gentleman was plainly impatient to be gone, however, and as they hurried into the cab immediately afterwards, perhaps Mr. Nickleby forgot to mention circumstances so unimportant.

There was a great bustle in Bishopsgate Street as they drew up, and (it being a windy day) half a dozen men were sailing across the road under great sheets of paper, bearing gigantic announcements that a Public Meeting would be held at one o'clock precisely, to take into consideration the

desirability of petitioning Parliament in favour of the United Metropolitan Improved Hot Bun and Cake Baking and Punctual Delivery Company, capital five millions, in five hundred thousand shares of ten pounds each; which sums were set out in fat black figures of considerable size.

After some excellent and moving speeches the petition in favour of the bill was agreed upon, and the meeting broke up with cheers, and Mr. Nickleby and the other directors went to the office to lunch, as they did every day at half-past one; and to repay themselves for which trouble (as the company was still in its infancy) they only charged three guineas each man for every such attendance.

CHAPTER III

Mr. Ralph Nickleby receives sad news of his brother, but bears up nobly against the information given him. The reader is informed how he likes Nicholas, who is herein introduced, and how kindly he proposes to make his fortune at once.

HAVING eagerly given his assistance towards getting rid of the lunch, with all that promptness and energy which are among the most important qualities that men of business can possess, Mr. Ralph Nickleby took a hearty farewell of his fellow speculators, and bent his steps westward in unusual good humour. As he passed St. Paul's he stepped aside into a doorway to set his watch, and with his hand on the key and his eye on the cathedral clock, was concentrated upon so doing, when a man suddenly stopped before him. It was Newman Noggs.

"Ah! Newman," said Mr. Nickleby, looking up as he went on with what he was doing. "The letter about the mortgage has come, has it? I thought it would."

"Wrong," replied Newman.

"What, and nobody called about it?" inquired Mr. Nickleby, pausing.

Noggs shook his head.

"What *has* come, then?" inquired Mr. Nickleby.

"I have," said Newman.

"What else," demanded his master, sternly.

"This," said Newman, drawing a sealed letter slowly from his pocket. "Postmark, Strand, black wax, black border,¹ woman's hand, C.N. in the corner."

"Black wax?" said Mr. Nickleby, glancing at the letter. "I know something of that hand too. Newman, I shouldn't be surprised if my brother were dead."

"I don't think you would," said Newman quietly.

"Why not, sir?" demanded Mr. Nickleby.

"You never are surprised," replied Newman, "that's all."

Mr. Nickleby snatched the letter from his assistant, and fixing a cold look upon him, opened, read it, put it in his pocket, and having now hit the time to a second, began winding up his watch.

"It is as I expected, Newman," said Mr. Nickleby, while he was thus engaged. "He is dead. Dear me! Well, that's a sudden thing. I shouldn't have thought it, really." With these touching expressions of sorrow, Mr. Nickleby replaced his watch in his pocket, and, fitting on his gloves very carefully, turned upon his way, and walked slowly westward with his hands behind him.

"Children alive?" inquired Noggs, stepping up to him.

"Why, that's the very thing," replied Mr. Nickleby, as though his thoughts were about them at that moment. "They are both alive."

"Both!" repeated Newman Noggs in a low voice.

¹ Black is the colour of sorrow. Black clothes are still worn when a near relation dies, though black-bordered letters are out of fashion.

"And the widow, too," added Mr. Nickleby, "and all three in London, confound them; all three here, Newman."

Newman fell a little behind his master, and his face was curiously twisted as by strong feeling, but whether of pain, or grief, or inward laughter, nobody but himself could possibly explain. The expression of a man's face is commonly a help to his thoughts, and explains his speech; but the face of Newman Noggs, in his ordinary moods, was a problem which no cleverness could solve.

"Go home!" said Mr. Nickleby, after they had walked a few paces: looking round at the clerk as though he were his dog. The words were scarcely uttered when Newman darted across the road, slipped among the crowd, and disappeared in an instant.

"Reasonable, certainly!" muttered Mr. Nickleby to himself, as he walked on, "very reasonable! My brother never did anything for me, and I never expected it; the breath is no sooner out of his body than I am to be looked to, as the support of a great strong woman, and a grown boy and girl. What are they to me! I never saw them."

Full of these, and many other reflections of a similar kind, Mr. Nickleby made the best of his way to the Strand, and, referring to his letter as if to find out the number of the house he wanted, stopped at a private door about half-way down that crowded street.

A miniature painter¹ lived there, for there was a large, yellow frame screwed upon the street door, in which were displayed, upon a black velvet ground, two portraits of naval dress coats with faces looking out of them, and telescopes attached; one of a young gentleman in a very red uniform, waving a sword; and one of a literary character

¹ miniature painter: miniatures were little pictures. The miniature painter in the days when there were no cameras served the same purpose as the photographer to-day.

with a high forehead, a pen and ink, six books and a curtain. There was, moreover, a touching picture of a young lady reading a manuscript in a forest, and a charming whole length of a large-headed little boy, sitting on a stool with his legs fore-shortened to the size of salt-spoons. Besides these works of art, there were a great many heads of old ladies and gentlemen smiling foolishly at each other out of blue and brown skies, and a beautifully written card of terms with a stamped border.

Mr. Nickleby glanced at these foolish things with great contempt, and gave a double knock, which, having been three times repeated, was answered by a servant-girl with an uncommonly dirty face.

"Is Mrs. Nickleby at home, girl?" demanded Ralph sharply.

"Her name ain't Nickleby," said the girl. "La Creevy, you mean."

Mr. Nickleby looked very indignant at the servant on being thus corrected, and demanded very sharply what she meant: which she was about to state, when a female voice, proceeding from a perpendicular staircase at the end of the passage, inquired who was wanted.

"Mrs. Nickleby," said Ralph.

"It's the second floor, Hannah," said the same voice; "what a stupid thing you are! Is the second floor at home?"

"Somebody went out just now, but I think it was the attic which had been cleaning of himself," replied the girl.

"You had better see," said the invisible female. "Show the gentleman where the bell is, and tell him he mustn't knock double knocks for the second floor; I can't allow a knock except when the bell's broken, and then it must be two single ones."

"Here," said Ralph, walking in without more speech. "I beg your pardon; is that Mrs. La what's-her-name?"

"Creevy—La Creevy," replied the voice, as a yellow head-dress showed over the staircase.

"I'll speak to you a moment, ma'am, with your leave," said Ralph.

The voice replied that the gentleman was to walk up; but he had walked up before it spoke, and stepping into the first floor, was received by the wearer of the yellow head-dress, who had a gown to go with it, and was of much the same colour herself. Miss La Creevy was an affected young lady of fifty, and Miss La Creevy's room was the yellow frame downstairs on a larger scale and somewhat dirtier.

"Hem!" said Miss La Creevy, coughing delicately behind her black silk glove. "A miniature, I presume. A very strongly marked face for the purpose, sir. Have you ever sat before?"

"You mistake my purpose, I see, ma'am," replied Mr. Nickleby, in his usual blunt fashion. "I have no money to throw away on miniatures, ma'am, and nobody to give one to (thank God) if I had. Seeing you on the stairs, I wanted to ask a question of you about some lodgers here."

Miss La Creevy coughed once more—this cough was to hide her disappointment—and said, "Oh, indeed!"

"I gather from what you said to your servant, that the floor above belongs to you, ma'am?" said Mr. Nickleby.

Yes it did, Miss La Creevy replied. The upper part of the house belonged to her, and as she had no necessity for the second-floor rooms just then, she was in the habit of letting them. Indeed there was a lady from the country and her two children in them, at that present speaking.

"A widow, ma'am?" said Ralph.

"Yes, she's a widow," replied the lady.

"A *poor* widow, ma'am?" said Ralph, with a powerful emphasis on that little adjective which conveys so much.

"Well, I'm afraid she is poor," answered Miss La Creevy.

"I happen to know that she is, ma'am," said Ralph. "Now, what business has a poor widow in such a house as this, ma'am?"

"Very true," replied Miss La Creevy, not at all displeased by the suggested praise of the rooms. "Exceedingly true."

"I know her circumstances thoroughly, ma'am," said Ralph; "in fact, I am a relation of the family; and I should recommend you not to keep them here, ma'am."

"I should hope, if there was any difficulty about paying the necessary bills," said Miss La Creevy with another cough, "that the lady's family would——"

"No they wouldn't, ma'am," interrupted Ralph, hastily. "Don't think it."

"If I am to understand that," said Miss La Creevy, "the case wears a very different appearance."

"You may understand it then," said Ralph, "and make your arrangements accordingly. I am the family, ma'am—at least I believe I am the only relation they have, and I think it right you should know I can't support them in their extravagances. How long have they taken these lodgings for?"

"Only from week to week," replied Miss La Creevy. "Mrs. Nickleby paid the first week in advance."

"Then you had better get them out at the end of it," said Ralph. "They can't do better than go back to the country, ma'am; they are in everybody's way, here."

"Certainly," said Miss La Creevy, rubbing her hands, "if Mrs. Nickleby took the rooms without the means of paying for them, it was very unbecoming a lady."

"Of course it was, ma'am," said Ralph.

"And naturally," continued Miss La Creevy, "I who am, *at present*—hem—an unprotected female, cannot afford to lose by the rooms."

"Of course you can't, ma'am," said Ralph.

"Though at the same time," added Miss La Creevy, who was plainly wavering between her good nature and her interest, "I have nothing whatever to say against the lady, who is extremely pleasant and friendly, though, poor thing, she seems terribly low in spirits; nor against the young people either, for nicer, or better-behaved, young people cannot be."

"Very well, ma'am," said Ralph, turning to the door, for these praises of poverty irritated him; "I have done my duty, and perhaps more than I ought: of course nobody will thank me for saying what I have."

"I am sure *I* am very much obliged to you, at least, sir," said Miss La Creevy in a gracious manner. "Would you do me the favour to look at a few examples of my portrait painting?"

"You're very good, ma'am," said Mr. Nickleby, making off with great speed; "but as I have a visit to pay upstairs and my time is precious, I really can't."

"At any other time when you are passing, I shall be most happy," said Miss La Creevy. "Perhaps you will have the kindness to take a price card with you? Thank you—good morning!"

"Good morning, ma'am," said Ralph, shutting the door quickly after him to prevent any further conversation. "Now for my sister-in-law. Bah!"

Climbing up some more perpendicular stairs, very skilfully made of nothing but corner stairs, Mr. Ralph Nickleby stopped to take breath at the top, when he was overtaken by the servant, whom the politeness of Miss La Creevy had sent to announce him, and who had apparently been making a variety of unsuccessful attempts since their last meeting, to wipe her dirty face clean upon an apron much dirtier.

"What name?" said the girl.

"Nickleby," replied Ralph.

"Oh! Mrs. Nickleby," said the girl, throwing open the door, "here's Mr. Nickleby."

A lady in black¹ rose as Mr. Nickleby entered, but appeared incapable of advancing to meet him, and leant upon the arm of a slight but very beautiful girl of about seventeen, who had been sitting by her. A youth, who appeared to be a year or two older, stepped forward and saluted Ralph as his uncle.

"Oh," growled Ralph, with an ugly frown, "you are Nicholas, I suppose."

"That is my name, sir," replied the youth.

"Put my hat down," said Ralph, in a commanding tone. "Well, ma'am, how do you do? You must bear up against sorrow, ma'am. *I* always do."

"Mine was no common loss!" said Mrs. Nickleby, applying her handkerchief to her eyes.

"It was no *uncommon* loss, ma'am," returned Ralph, as he coolly unbuttoned his coat. "Husbands die every day, and wives too."

"And brothers also, sir," said Nicholas with a glance of indignation.

"Yes, sir, and puppies and pet dogs likewise," replied his uncle, taking a chair. "You didn't mention in your letter what my brother's complaint was, ma'am."

"The doctors could not put it down to any particular disease," said Mrs. Nickleby, shedding tears. "We have too much reason to fear that he died of a broken heart."

"Pooh!" said Ralph, "there's no such thing. I can understand a man's dying of a broken neck, or suffering from a broken arm, or a broken head, or a broken leg, or a broken nose; but a broken heart!—nonsense, it's humbug. If a man can't pay his debts, he dies of a broken heart, and his widow's a martyr."

¹ See note, p. 28.



A lady in black rose as Mr. Nickleby entered

"Some people, I believe, have no hearts to break," observed Nicholas, quietly.

"How old is this boy, for God's sake?" inquired Ralph, wheeling back his chair, and surveying his nephew from head to foot with great contempt.

"Nicholas is very nearly nineteen," replied the widow.

"Nineteen, eh!" said Ralph, "and what do you mean to do for your bread, sir?"

"Not to live upon my mother," replied Nicholas, his heart swelling as he spoke.

"You'd have little enough to live upon if you did," retorted the uncle, eyeing him contemptuously.

"Whatever it be," said Nicholas, flushed with anger, "I shall not look to you to make it more."

"Nicholas, my dear, recollect yourself," said Mrs. Nickleby, reproachfully.

"Dear Nicholas, please," urged the young lady.

"Hold your tongue, sir," said Ralph. "Upon my word! Fine beginnings, Mrs. Nickleby—fine beginnings!"

Mrs. Nickleby made no other reply than begging Nicholas by a gesture to keep silent; and the uncle and nephew looked at each other for some seconds without speaking. The face of the old man was stern, hard and forbidding; that of the young one open, frank and handsome. The old man's eye was keen with the twinklings of greed and cunning; the young man's bright with the light of intelligence and spirit. His figure was somewhat slight, but manly and well-informed; and, apart from all the grace of youth and beauty, there was something coming from the warm young heart in his look and bearing which kept the old man down.

However striking such a contrast as this may be to lookers-on, none ever feel it with half the keenness with which it strikes to the very soul of him whose inferiority

it marks. It hurt Ralph in the depths of his heart, and he hated Nicholas from that hour.

Their inspecting each other was at length brought to a close by Ralph withdrawing his eyes, with a great show of contempt, and calling Nicholas "a boy." This word is much used as a term of reproach by elderly gentlemen towards their juniors: probably with the view of deceiving society into the belief that if they could be young again, they wouldn't on any account.

"Well, ma'am," said Ralph, impatiently, "the creditors have taken everything, you tell me, and there's nothing left for you?"

"Nothing," replied Mrs. Nickleby.

"And you spent what little money you had, in coming all the way to London, to see what I could do for you?" pursued Ralph.

"I hoped," said Mrs. Nickleby, brokenly, "that you might have an opportunity of doing something for your brother's children. It was his dying wish that I should appeal to you for their sake."

"I don't know how it is," muttered Ralph, walking up and down the room, "but whenever a man dies without any property of his own, he always seems to think he has a right to give away other people's. What is your daughter fit for, ma'am?"

"Kate has been well educated," sobbed Mrs. Nickleby. "Tell your uncle, my dear, how far you went in French and extras."

The poor girl was about to murmur something, when her uncle stopped her, with very little politeness.

"We must try and get you a job at some boarding school," said Ralph. "You have not been brought up too delicately for that, I hope."

"No, indeed, uncle," replied the weeping girl. "I will try to do anything that will gain me a home and bread."

"Well, well," said Ralph, a little softened, either by his niece's beauty or her distress (stretch a point and say the latter).¹ "You must try it, and if the life is too hard, perhaps dressmaking or needlework will come lighter. Have you ever done anything, sir?" (turning to his nephew).

"No," replied Nicholas, bluntly.

"No, I thought not!" said Ralph. "This is the way my brother brought up his children, ma'am."

"Nicholas has not long completed such education as his poor father could give him," answered Mrs. Nickleby, "and he was thinking of——"

"Of making something of him some day," said Ralph. "The old story; always thinking, and never doing. If my brother had been a man of activity and prudence, he might have left you a rich woman, ma'am: and if he had turned his son into the world, as my father turned me, when I wasn't as old as that boy by a year and a half, he would have been in a situation to help you, instead of being a burden upon you, and increasing your distress. My brother was a thoughtless, inconsiderate man, Mrs. Nickleby, and nobody, I am sure, can have better reason to feel that than you."

This set the widow thinking that perhaps she might have made a more successful marriage with her one thousand pounds, and then she began to reflect what a comfortable sum it would have been just then: which sad thoughts made her tears flow faster, and in the fullness of these griefs she (being a well-meaning woman enough, but weak also) fell first to sorrowing at her hard fate, and then to remarking, with many sobs, that to be sure she had been a slave to poor Nicholas, and had often told him that she might have married better (as indeed she had, very often), and that she never knew in his lifetime how the money

¹ Stretch a point: let us give him the benefit of the doubt, and believe the thing more favourable to his character.

went, but that if he had confided in her they might all have been better off that day; with other bitter recollections common to most married ladies, either during their marriage, or afterwards, or at both periods. Mrs. Nickleby concluded by regretting that the dear departed had never had the sense to profit by her advice, except on one occasion: which was a strictly truthful statement, since he had only acted upon it once, and had ruined himself in consequence.

Mr. Ralph Nickleby heard all this with a half smile; and when the widow had finished, quietly took up the subject where it had been left before the above outbreak.

"Are you willing to work, sir?" he inquired, frowning at his nephew.

"Of course I am," replied Nicholas proudly.

"Then see here, sir," said his uncle. "This caught my eye this morning and you may thank your stars for it."

With this introduction, Mr. Ralph Nickleby took a newspaper from his pocket, and after unfolding it, and looking for a short time among the advertisements, read as follows:

"EDUCATION.—At Mr. Wackford Squeers's Academy, Dotheboys Hall, at the delightful village of Dotheboys, near Greta Bridge in Yorkshire, Youth are boarded, clothed, booked, provided with pocket-money, and with all necessities, instructed in all languages, living and dead, mathematics, spelling, geometry, astronomy, trigonometry, the use of the globes, algebra, single stick¹ (if required), writing, arithmetic, fortification, and every other branch of classical literature. Terms, twenty guineas a year. No extras, no holidays, and food unparalleled. Mr. Squeers is in town, and attends daily, from one till four, at the Saracen's Head, Snow Hill. N.B.—An able assistant

¹ single stick: a game consisting of fighting with sticks. There is a first-class description of a single-stick contest at the beginning of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* by Thomas Hughes.

wanted. Yearly salary £5. A Master of Arts would be preferred."

"There!" said Ralph, folding the paper again. "Let him get that situation and his fortune is made."

"But he is not a Master of Arts," said Mrs. Nickleby.

"That," replied Ralph, "that I think, can be got over."

"But the salary is so small, and it is such a long way off, uncle!" said Kate unsteadily.

"Hush, Kate my dear," said Mrs. Nickleby; "your uncle must know best."

"I say," repeated Ralph, sharply, "let him get that situation and his fortune is made. If he doesn't like that, let him get one for himself. Without friends, money, recommendation, or knowledge of business of any kind, let him find honest employment in London which will keep him in shoe leather, and I'll give him a thousand pounds. At least," said Mr. Ralph Nickleby, stopping himself, "I would if I had it."

"Poor fellow!" said the young lady. "Oh! uncle, must we be separated so soon!"

"Don't worry your uncle with questions when he is thinking only for our good, my love," said Mrs. Nickleby. "Nicholas, my dear, I wish you would say something."

"Yes, mother, yes," said Nicholas, who had so far remained silent, and lost in thought. "If I am fortunate enough to be appointed to this post, sir, for which I am so imperfectly qualified, what will become of those I leave behind?"

"Your mother and sister, sir," replied Ralph, "will be provided for, in that case (not otherwise), by me, and placed in some kind of life in which they will be able to be independent. That will be my immediate care; they will not remain as they are, one week after your departure, I will undertake."

"Then," said Nicholas, starting gaily up and shaking his

uncle's hand warmly, "I am ready to do anything you wish me. Let us try our fortune with Mr. Squeers at once; he can but refuse."

"He won't do that," said Ralph. "He will be glad to have you on my recommendation. Make yourself of use to him, and you'll rise to be a partner in the school in no time. Bless me, only think! if he were to die, why your fortune's made at once."

"To be sure I see it all," said poor Nicholas, delighted with a thousand visionary ideas, that his good spirits and his inexperience were calling up before him. "Or suppose some young nobleman who is being educated at the Hall, were to take a fancy to me, and get his father to appoint me as his travelling tutor when he left, and when we come back from the continent, got me some handsome appointment. Eh! uncle?"

"Ah, to be sure," sneered Ralph.

"And who knows, but when he came to see me when I was settled (as he would of course), he might fall in love with Kate, who would be keeping my house, and—and—marry her, eh! uncle? Who knows?"

"Who, indeed," growled Ralph.

"How happy we should be!" cried Nicholas with enthusiasm. "The pain of parting is nothing to the joy of meeting again. Kate will be a beautiful woman, and I so proud to hear them say so, and mother so happy to be with us once again, and all these sad times forgotten, and——" The picture was too bright a one to bear, and Nicholas, fairly overpowered by it, smiled faintly, and burst into tears.

Nicholas, having carefully copied the address of Mr. Squeers, the uncle and nephew went out together in search of that learned gentleman; Nicholas firmly persuading himself that he had done his relative great injustice in disliking him at first sight; and Mrs. Nickleby being at some pains to inform her daughter that she was sure he

was a much more kindly disposed person than he seemed; which, Miss Nickleby dutifully remarked, he might very easily be.

CHAPTER IV

Nicholas and his uncle (to secure the fortune without loss of time) wait upon Mr. Wackford Squeers, the Yorkshire schoolmaster.

SNOW HILL! What kind of place can the quiet town's-people who see the words shining, in all the brightness of gold letters and dark shading, on the north-country coaches, take Snow Hill to be? All people have some indefinite and shadowy idea of a place whose name is frequently before their eyes, or often in their eyes. What a vast number of such ideas there must be always floating about, regarding this same Snow Hill. The name is such a good one. Snow Hill—Snow Hill too, coupled with a Saracen's Head: picturing to us by a double association of ideas, something stern and rocky! A cold, lonely piece of country, open to piercing winds and fierce wintry storms—a dark, icy, gloomy waste land, lonely by day, and scarcely to be thought of by honest folks at night—a place which solitary travellers avoid, and where desperate robbers collect; this, or something like this, should be the common idea of Snow Hill, in those distant and rural parts, through which the Saracen's Head, like some terrible spirit, rushes each day and night with mysterious and ghost-like punctuality; holding its swift and headlong course in all weathers, and seeming to defy the worst the weather can do.

The reality is rather different, but by no means to be despised nevertheless. There, at the very centre of London,

in the heart of its life and business, in the midst of a round of noise and motion: like a rock amongst the giant currents of life that flow ceaselessly on from different quarters, and meet beneath its walls: stands Newgate;¹ and in that crowded street on which it frowns so darkly—within a few feet of the dirty tumbledown houses—upon the very spot on which the sellers of soup and fish and damaged fruit are now carrying on their trades—dozens of human beings, in the middle of a roar of sounds to which even the noise of a great city is as nothing, four, six, or eight strong men at a time, have been hurried violently and swiftly from the world, when the scene has been made frightful by too great a mob of people; when curious eyes have stared from window, and housetop, and wall and column; and when, in the mass of white and upturned faces, the dying wretch, in his last sweeping look of pain, has met not one—not one—that showed a mark of pity or of sympathy.

Near to the prison, and by consequence near to Smithfield also, and the hurry and noise of the city; and just on that particular part of Snow Hill where omnibus horses going eastward seriously think of falling down on purpose, and where horses in cabs going westward not infrequently fall by accident, is the coach-yard of the Saracen's Head Inn, its doorway guarded by two Saracens' heads and shoulders. The inn itself, decorated with another Saracen's Head, frowns upon you from the top of the yard; while from the luggage door at the back of all the red coaches that are standing therein, there stares a small Saracen's Head, with a twin expression to the large Saracens' Heads below, so that the general appearance of the building is decidedly of the Saracenic order.

When you walk up this yard you will see the booking-office on your left, and the tower of St. Sepulchre's Church,

¹ Newgate: a London prison where criminals were commonly put to death.

darting abruptly up into the sky, on your right, and a row of bedrooms on both sides. Just before you, you will observe a long window with the words "coffee-room" plainly painted above it; and looking out of that window, you would have seen in addition, if you had gone at the right time, Mr. Wackford Squeers with his hands in his pockets.

Mr. Squeers's appearance was not attractive. He had but one eye, and most people prefer to see two. The eye he had was unquestionably useful, but decidedly not beautiful: being of a greenish grey, and ugly in shape. The blank side of his face was much wrinkled and twisted, which gave him a very unpleasant appearance, especially when he smiled, at which times his expression bordered closely on the villainous. His hair was very flat and shiny, except at the ends, where it was brushed stiffly up from a low, prominent forehead, which suited his harsh voice and coarse manner. He was about fifty-two or fifty-three, and a little below the middle size; he wore a white scarf with long ends, and a suit of sober black; but his coat sleeves being a great deal too long, and his trousers a great deal too short, he appeared ill-at-ease in his clothes, and as if he were in a continual state of astonishment at finding himself so respectable.

Mr. Squeers was standing in a box by one of the coffee-room fire-places, fitted with one such table as is usually seen in coffee-rooms, and two of extraordinary shapes and sizes made to suit the angles of the partition. In a corner of the seat was a very small wooden trunk, tied round with a short piece of cord; and on the trunk was perched—his boots and trouser legs hanging in the air—a very small boy, with his shoulders drawn up to his ears, and his hands planted on his knees, who glanced timidly at the schoolmaster, from time to time, with obvious fear and apprehension.

"Half-past three," muttered Mr. Squeers, turning from

the window and looking angrily at the coffee-room clock. "There will be nobody here to-day."

Very angry at this idea, Mr. Squeers looked at the little boy to see if he was doing anything he could beat him for. As he happened not to be doing anything at all, he merely boxed his ears, and told him not to do it again.

"At Midsummer," muttered Mr. Squeers, going on with his complaint, "I took down ten boys; ten twentys is two hundred pound. I go back at eight o'clock to-morrow morning, and have got only three—three noughts is a nought—three twos is six—sixty pound. What's come of all the boys? what's parents got in their heads? what does it all mean?"

Here the little boy on the top of the trunk gave a violent sneeze.

"Hullo, sir!" growled the schoolmaster, turning round. "What's that, sir?"

"Nothing, please sir," said the little boy.

"Nothing, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Squeers.

"Please, sir, I sneezed," replied the boy, trembling till the little trunk shook under him.

"Oh! sneezed, did you?" retorted Mr. Squeers. "Then what did you say 'nothing' for, sir?"

For lack of a better answer to this question, the little boy put the backs of his hands to his eyes and began to cry, so Mr. Squeers knocked him off the trunk with a blow on one side of his face, and knocked him on again with a blow on the other.

"Wait till I get you down into Yorkshire, my young gentleman," said Mr. Squeers. "and then I'll give you the rest. Will you hold that noise, sir?"

"Ye—ye—yes," sobbed the little boy, rubbing his face very hard with his handkerchief.

"Then do so at once, sir," said Squeers. "Do you hear?"

As this warning was accompanied with a threatening

gesture, and spoken with a savage look, the little boy rubbed his face harder as if to keep the tears back; and, beyond alternately sniffing and choking, gave no further outlet to his feelings.

"Mr. Squeers," said the waiter, looking in at this point. "here's a gentleman asking for you at the bar."

"Show the gentleman in, Richard," replied Mr. Squeers in a soft voice. "Put your handkerchief in your pocket, you little rascal, or I'll murder you when the gentleman goes."

The schoolmaster had scarcely uttered these words in a fierce whisper when the stranger entered. Pretending not to see him, Mr. Squeers made as if busy mending a pen and offering kind-hearted advice to his youthful pupil.

"My dear child," said Mr. Squeers, "all people have their trials. This early trial of yours that is fit to make your little heart burst, and your very eyes come out of your head with crying, what is it? Nothing; less than nothing. You are leaving your friends, but you will have a father in me, my dear, and a mother in Mrs. Squeers. At the delightful village of Dotheboys, near Greta Bridge in Yorkshire, where youth are boarded, clothed, booked, washed, provided with pocket-money and all necessities——"

"It is the gentleman," observed the stranger, stopping the schoolmaster going over the advertisement. "Mr. Squeers, I believe, sir."

"The same, sir," said Mr. Squeers, pretending extreme surprise.

"The gentleman," said the stranger, "that advertised in *The Times* newspaper."

"—*Morning Post, Chronicle, Herald and Advertiser*, regarding the College called Dotheboys Hall, at the delightful village of Dotheboys, near Greta Bridge, in Yorkshire," added Mr. Squeers. "You come on business, sir, I see by my young friends. How do you do, my little gentlemen?"

and how do you do, sir?" With this salutation Mr. Squeers patted the heads of two hollow-eyed, small-boned little boys, whom the stranger had brought with him, and waited for further communications.

"I am in the oil and colour trade. My name is Snawley, sir," said the stranger.

Squeers inclined his head as much as to say, "And a remarkably pretty name too."

The stranger continued. "I have been thinking, Mr. Squeers, of placing my two boys at your school."

"It is not for me to say so, sir," replied Mr. Squeers, "but I don't think you could possibly do a better thing."

"Hem!" said the other. "Twenty pounds a year, I believe, Mr. Squeers?"

"Guineas," replied the schoolmaster, in a persuasive tone.

"Pounds, for two, I think, Mr. Squeers," said Mr. Snawley, solemnly.

"I don't think it could be done, sir," replied Squeers, as though he had never considered the proposal before. "Let me see; four fives is twenty, double that and take away the—well, a pound either way shall not stand between us. You must recommend me to your friends, sir, and make it up that way."

"They are not great eaters," said Mr. Snawley.

"Oh! that doesn't matter at all," replied Squeers. "We don't consider the boys' appetites at our school." This was strictly true; they did not.

"Every wholesome luxury, sir, that Yorkshire can offer," continued Mr. Squeers; "every beautiful moral that Mrs. Squeers can teach; every—in short, every comfort of a home that a boy could wish for, will be theirs, Mr. Snawley."

"I should wish their morals to be particularly attended to," said Mr. Snawley.

"I am glad of that, sir," replied the schoolmaster, draw-

ing himself up. "They have come to the right shop for morals, sir."

"You are a moral man yourself, sir," said Mr. Snawley.

"I rather believe I am, sir," replied Squeers.

"I have the satisfaction to know you are, sir," said Mr. Snawley. "I asked one of the men who recommend you, and he said you were religious."

"Well, sir, I hope I am a little in that line," replied Squeers.

"I hope I am also," replied the other. "Could I say a few words with you in the next box?"

"By all means," answered Squeers with a grin. "My dears, will you speak to your new playfellow a minute or two? That is one of my boys, sir. Belling, his name is—a Taunton boy that, sir."

"Is he, indeed?" said Mr. Snawley, looking at the poor little wretch as if he was some extraordinary natural curiosity.

"He goes down with me to-morrow, sir," said Squeers. "That's his luggage that he is a-sitting upon now. Each boy is required to bring, sir, two suits of clothes, six shirts, six pairs of stockings, two nightcaps, two pocket handkerchiefs, two pairs of shoes, two hats, and a razor."

"A razor," exclaimed Mr. Snawley, as they walked into the next box. "What for?"

"To shave with," replied Squeers in a slow and measured tone.

There was not much in these three words, but there must have been something in the manner in which they were said, to attract attention; for the schoolmaster and his companion looked steadily at each other for a few seconds, and then exchanged a very meaning smile. Snawley was a smooth, flat-nosed man, dressed in dark clothes, and long black leggings, and bearing in his face an expression of

obvious self-denial and holiness; so, his smiling without any apparent reason was the more remarkable.

"Up to what age do you keep boys at your school, then?" he asked at length.

"Just as long as their friends make the quarterly payments to my agent in town, or until such time as they run away," replied Squeers. "Let us understand each other; I see we may safely do so. What are these boys, natural children?"

"No," answered Snawley, meeting the gaze of the schoolmaster's one eye. "They aren't."

"I thought they might be," said Squeers, coolly. "We have a good many of them; that boy's one."

"Him in the next box?" said Snawley.

Squeers nodded agreement; his companion took another peep at the little boy on the trunk, and turning round again, looked as if he were quite disappointed to see him so much like other boys, and said he should hardly have thought it.

"He is," cried Squeers. "But about those boys of yours; you wanted to speak to me?"

"Yes," replied Snawley. "The fact is, I am not their father, Mr. Squeers, I am only their step-father."

"Oh! Is that it?" said the schoolmaster. "That explains it at once. I was wondering what the devil you were going to send them to Yorkshire for. Ha! Ha! Oh, I understand now."

"You see, I have married the mother," pursued Snawley; "it's expensive keeping boys at home, and as she has a little money in her own right, I am afraid (women are so very foolish, Mr. Squeers) that she might be led to waste it on them, which would be their ruin, you know."

"I see," said Squeers, throwing himself back in his chair and waving his hand.

"And this," resumed Snawley, "has made me anxious to

put them to some school a good distance off, where there are no holidays—none of those ill-judged comings home twice a year that unsettle children's minds so—and where they may rough it a little—you comprehend? ”

“The payments regular, and no questions asked,” said Squeers, nodding his head.

“That's it exactly,” replied the other. “Morals strictly attended to though.”

“Strictly,” said Squeers.

“Not too much writing home allowed, I suppose,” said the step-father, hesitating.

“None, except a dictated letter at Christmas, to say they were so happy, and hope they may never be sent for,” answered Squeers.

“Nothing could be better,” said the step-father, rubbing his hands.

“Then, as we understand each other,” said Squeers, “will you allow me to ask you whether you consider me highly virtuous, a good example, and a well-conducted man in private life: and whether, as a person whose business it is to take charge of youth, you place the strongest confidence in my complete honesty, generosity, religious principles and ability? ”

“Certainly, I do,” replied the step-father, returning the schoolmaster's grin.

“Perhaps you won't object to say that, if I refer people to you? ”

“Not the least in the world.”

“That's your sort! ” said Squeers, taking up a pen; “this is doing business, and that's what I like.”

Having entered Mr. Snawley's address, the schoolmaster had next to perform the still more agreeable office of entering the receipt of the first quarter's payment in advance, which he had scarcely completed when another voice was heard inquiring for Mr. Squeers.



"This is my nephew, sir, Mr. Nicholas Nickleby"

"Here he is," replied the schoolmaster. "What is it?"

"Only a matter of business, sir," said Ralph Nickleby, presenting himself, closely followed by Nicholas. "There was an advertisement of yours in the papers this morning?"

"There was, sir. This way, if you please," said Squeers, who had by this time got back to the box by the fire-place. "Won't you be seated?"

"Why, I think I will," replied Ralph, suiting the action to the word, and placing his hat on the table before him. "This is my nephew, sir, Mr. Nicholas Nickleby."

"How do you do, sir?" said Squeers.

Nicholas bowed, said he was very well, and seemed very much astonished at the outward appearance of the owner of Dotheboys Hall: as indeed he was.

"Perhaps you recollect me?" said Ralph, looking narrowly at the schoolmaster.

"You paid me a small account at each of my half-yearly visits to town, for some years, I think, sir," replied Squeers.

"I did," answered Ralph.

"For the parents of a boy named Dorker, who unfortunately——"

"—unfortunately died at Dotheboys Hall," said Ralph, finishing the sentence.

"I remember very well, sir," replied Squeers. "Ah! Mrs. Squeers, sir, was as fond of that lad as if he had been her own; the attention, sir, that was given to that boy in his illness! Dry toast and warm tea offered him night and morning when he couldn't swallow anything—a candle in his bedroom on the very night he died—the best dictionary sent up for him to lay his head upon—I don't regret it though. It is a pleasant thing to think that one did one's duty by him."

Ralph smiled, as if he meant anything but smiling, and looked round at the strangers present.

"These are only some pupils of mine," said Wackford Squeers, pointing to the little boy on the trunk and the two little boys on the floor, who had been staring at each other without uttering a word, and twisting their bodies into the most remarkable shapes, according to the custom of little boys when they first become acquainted. "This gentleman, sir, is a parent who is kind enough to compliment me upon the course of education adopted at Dotheboys Hall, which is situated, sir, at the delightful village of Dotheboys, near Greta Bridge, in Yorkshire, where youth are boarded, clothed, booked, washed, furnished with pocket-money——"

"Yes, we know all about that, sir," interrupted Ralph sharply. "It's in the advertisement."

"You are very right, sir; it is in the advertisement," replied Squeers.

"And in the matter of fact besides," interrupted Mr. Snawley, "I feel bound to assure you, sir, and I am proud to have this opportunity of assuring you, that I consider Mr. Squeers a gentleman highly virtuous, a good example, well-conducted, and——"

"I make no doubt of it, sir," interrupted Ralph, stopping the flood of recommendation; "no doubt of it at all. Suppose we come to business."

"With all my heart, sir," replied Squeers. "'Never postpone business' is the very first lesson we teach our commercial pupils. Master Belling, my dear, always remember that, do you hear?"

"Yes, sir," repeated Master Belling.

"He recollects what it is, does he?" said Ralph.

"Tell the gentleman," said Squeers.

"'Never,'" repeated Master Belling.

"Very good," said Squeers. "Go on."

"'Never,'" repeated Master Belling again.

"Very good indeed," said Squeers. "Yes."

"P," suggested Nicholas, good-naturedly.

"Perform—business!" said Master Belling. "'Never—perform—business!'"

"Very well, sir," said Squeers, darting a furious look at the offender. "You and I will perform a little business on our private account by and by."

"And just now," said Ralph, "we had better do our own, perhaps."

"If you please," said Squeers.

"Well," resumed Ralph, "it's brief enough; soon explained, and, I hope, easily concluded. You have advertised for an able assistant, sir?"

"Precisely so," said Squeers.

"And you really want one?"

"Certainly," answered Squeers.

"Here he is!" said Ralph. "My nephew Nicholas, hot from school, with everything he learnt there going round and round in his head, and nothing going round and round in his pocket, is just the man you want."

"I am afraid," said Squeers, puzzled by such an application from a youth of Nicholas's figure, "I am afraid the young man won't suit me."

"Yes, he will," said Ralph; "I know better. Don't be cast down, sir; you will be teaching all the young noblemen in Dotheboys Hall in less than a week's time, unless this gentleman is more obstinate than I take him to be."

"I fear, sir," said Nicholas, addressing Mr. Squeers, "that you object to my youth, and to my not being a Master of Arts?"

"The absence of a college degree is an objection," replied Squeers, looking as grave as he could, and considerably puzzled, no less by the contrast between the simplicity of the nephew and the worldly manner of the uncle, than by the reference he did not understand to the young noblemen under his care.

"Look here, sir," said Ralph, "I'll put this matter in its true light in two seconds."

"If you'll have the goodness," replied Squeers.

"This is a boy, or a youth, or a lad, or a young man or whatever you like to call him, of eighteen or nineteen, or thereabouts," said Ralph.

"That I see," observed the schoolmaster.

"So do I," said Mr. Snawley, thinking it as well to back his new friend occasionally.

"His father is dead, he is wholly ignorant of the world, has no money whatever, and wants something to do," said Ralph. "I recommend him to this splendid establishment of yours, as an opening which will lead him to fortune if he turns it to proper account. Do you see that?"

"Everybody must see that," replied Squeers, half imitating the sneer with which the old gentleman was regarding his unconscious relative.

"I do, of course," said Nicholas eagerly.

"He does, of course, you observe," said Ralph, in the same dry, hard manner.

"If in a foolish moment of bad temper he should throw away this golden opportunity before he has brought it to perfection, I consider myself excused from giving any assistance to his mother and sister. Look at him, and think of the use he may be to you in half a dozen ways! Now, the question is, whether, for some time to come at all events, he won't serve your purpose better than twenty of the kind of people you would get under ordinary circumstances. Isn't that a question for consideration?"

"Yes, it is," said Squeers, answering a nod of Ralph's head with a nod of his own.

"Good," answered Ralph. "Let me have two words with you."

The two words were had apart; in a couple of minutes Mr. Wackford Squeers announced that Mr. Nicholas

Nickleby was, from that moment, thoroughly appointed to the office of first assistant master at Dotheboys Hall.

"Your uncle's recommendation has done it, Mr. Nickleby," said Wackford Squeers.

Nicholas, overjoyed at his success, shook his uncle's hand warmly, and could almost have worshipped Squeers upon the spot.

"He is an odd-looking man," thought Nicholas. "What of that? Porson¹ was an odd-looking man, and so was Doctor Johnson;² all these bookworms are."

"At eight o'clock to-morrow morning, Mr. Nickleby," said Squeers, "the coach starts. You must be here at a quarter before, as we take these boys with us."

"Certainly, sir," said Nicholas.

"And your fare down, I have paid," growled Ralph. "So you'll have nothing to do but keep yourself warm."

Here was another instance of his uncle's generosity! Nicholas felt his unexpected kindness so much, that he could scarcely find words to thank him; indeed he had not found half enough, when they took leave of the schoolmaster, and emerged from the Saracen's Head gateway.

"I shall be here in the morning to see you fairly off," said Ralph. "No trying to get out of it!"

"Thank you, sir," replied Nicholas; "I shall never forget your kindness."

"Take care you don't," replied his uncle. "You had better go home now, and pack up what you have got to pack. Do you think you could find your way to Golden Square first?"

"Certainly," said Nicholas. "I can easily inquire."

"Leave these papers with my clerk, then," said Ralph.

¹ Porson: famous Greek scholar.

² Doctor Johnson: the most famous man of letters in the second half of the eighteenth century. To-day better known for his conversation, much of which is preserved in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, than for his original writings.

producing a small parcel, "and tell him to wait till I come home."

Nicholas cheerfully undertook the errand, and bidding his worthy uncle an affectionate farewell, which that warm-hearted old gentleman acknowledged by a growl, hastened away to do his errand.

He found Golden Square in due course; Mr. Noggs, who had stepped out for a minute or so to the public-house, was opening the door with a latch-key as he reached the steps.

"What's that?" inquired Noggs, pointing to the parcel.

"Papers from my uncle," replied Nicholas; "and you're to have the goodness to wait till he comes home, if you please."

"Uncle!" cried Noggs.

"Mr. Nickleby," said Nicholas in explanation.

"Come in," said Newman.

Without another word he led Nicholas into the passage and from there into the little room at the end of it, where he pushed him into a chair, and mounting upon his high stool, sat, with his arms hanging down by his sides, gazing fixedly upon him, as from a tower of observation.

"There is no answer," said Nicholas, laying the parcel on the table beside him.

Newman said nothing, but folding his arms, and pushing his head forward so as to obtain a nearer view of Nicholas's face, examined his features closely.

"No answer," said Nicholas, speaking very loud, under the impression that Newman Noggs was deaf.

Newman placed his hands upon his knees, and, without uttering a syllable, continued the same close examination of his companion's face.

This was such a very strange proceeding on the part of an utter stranger, and his appearance was so extremely peculiar, that Nicholas, who had a sufficiently keen sense of the ridiculous, could not refrain from breaking into a

smile as he inquired whether Mr. Noggs had any commands for him.

Noggs shook his head and sighed; upon which Nicholas rose, and remarking that he required no rest, bade him good morning.

It was a great effort for Newman Noggs, and nobody knows to this day how he ever came to make it, the other party being wholly unknown to him, but he drew a long breath, and actually said, out loud, without once stopping, that if the young gentleman did not object to tell, he should like to know what his uncle was going to do for him.

Nicholas had not the least objection in the world, but on the contrary was rather pleased to have an opportunity of talking on the subject which occupied his thoughts; so, he sat down again, and (his cheerful imagination warming as he spoke) entered into an eager and glowing description of all the honours and advantages to be obtained from his appointment at that seat of learning, Dotheboys Hall.

"But, what's the matter—are you ill?" said Nicholas, suddenly breaking off, as his companion, after throwing himself into a variety of strange attitudes, pushed his hands under the stool, and cracked his finger joints as if he were snapping all the bones in his hands.

Newman Noggs made no reply, but went on shrugging his shoulders and cracking his finger joints; smiling horribly all the time, and looking steadily at nothing, out of the tops of his eyes, in a most shocking manner.

At first Nicholas thought that the mysterious man was in a fit, but on further consideration, decided that he was drunk, under which circumstances he thought it prudent to make off at once. He looked back when he had got the street door open. Newman Noggs was still making the same extraordinary gestures, and the cracking of his fingers sounded louder than ever.

CHAPTER V

Nicholas starts for Yorkshire. Of his leave-taking and his fellow-travellers and what happened to them on the road.

IF tears dropped into a trunk were charms to preserve its owner from sorrow and misfortune, Nicholas would have commenced his journey with very happy prospects. There was so much to be done, and so little time to do it in; so many kind words to be spoken, and such bitter pain in the hearts in which they rose to hinder their expression; that the little preparations for his journey were made sadly indeed.

The box was packed at last, and then there came supper, with some little luxury provided for the occasion, and as a set-off against the expense of which, Kate and her mother had pretended to dine when Nicholas was out. Nicholas slept well till six next morning; dreamed of home, or of what was home once—no matter which, for things that are changed and gone will come back as they once used to be, thank God! in sleep—and rose quite brisk and gay. He wrote a few lines in pencil, to say the good-bye he was afraid to pronounce himself, and laying them, with half his little stock of money, at his sister's door, shouldered his box and crept softly downstairs.

"Is that you, Hannah?" cried a voice from Miss La Creevy's sitting-room, from which shone the light of a feeble candle.

"It is I, Miss La Creevy," said Nicholas, putting down the box and looking in.

"Bless us!" exclaimed Miss La Creevy, starting and putting a hand to her curl papers. "You're up very early, Mr. Nickleby."

"So are you," replied Nicholas.

"It's the fine arts that bring me out of bed, Mr. Nickleby," returned the lady. "I'm waiting for the light to carry out an idea."

Miss La Creevy had got up early to put a fancy nose on the picture of an ugly little boy, intended for his grandmother in the country, who was expected to leave him property if he was like the family.

"To carry out an idea," repeated Miss La Creevy: "and that's the great convenience of living in a busy street like the Strand. When I want a nose or an eye for any particular sitter, I have only to look out of the window and wait till I get one."

"Does it take long to get a nose now?" inquired Nicholas, smiling.

"Why, that depends in a great measure on the pattern," replied Miss La Creevy. "Snubs, romans and flats are plentiful enough; but perfect aquilines, I am sorry to say, are scarce, and we generally use them for uniforms or public characters."

"Indeed!" said Nicholas. "If I should meet with any in my travels, I'll endeavour to sketch them for you."

"You don't mean to say that you are really going all the way down into Yorkshire this cold winter's weather, Mr. Nickleby?" said Miss La Creevy. "I heard something of it last night."

"I do, indeed," replied Nicholas. "Needs must, you know, when somebody drives.¹ Necessity is my driver, and that is only another name for the same gentleman."

"Well, I'm very sorry for it; that's all I can say," said Miss La Creevy; "as much on your mother's and sister's account as yours. Your sister is a very pretty young lady, Mr. Nickleby, and that is an additional reason why she

¹ when somebody drives: the reference is to the proverb, "Needs must when the devil drives."

should have somebody to protect her. I persuaded her to give me a sitting or two, for the street-door case. Ah! she'll make a sweet picture." As Miss La Creevy spoke, she held up an ivory face crossed with very obvious sky-blue veins, and regarded it with so much pleasure that Nicholas quite envied her.

"If you ever have the opportunity of showing Kate some little kindness," said Nicholas, presenting his hand. "I think you will."

"Depend upon that," said the good-natured painter; "and God bless you, Mr. Nickleby; and I wish you well."

It was very little that Nicholas knew of the world, but he guessed enough about its ways to think, that if he gave Miss La Creevy one little kiss, perhaps she might not be the less kind to those he was leaving behind. So he gave her three or four with a kind of laughing gallantry, and Miss La Creevy showed no greater signs of displeasure than declaring, as she adjusted her yellow turban, that she had never heard of such a thing, and couldn't have believed it possible.

Having completed the unexpected interview in this satisfactory manner, Nicholas hastily withdrew himself from the house. By the time he had found a man to carry his box it was only seven o'clock, so he walked slowly on, a little in advance of the porter, and very probably with not half so light a heart within his breast as the man had, although he had no waistcoat to cover it with, and had evidently, from the appearance of his other garments, been spending the night in a stable, and taking his breakfast at a pump.

Regarding, with no small curiosity and interest, all the busy preparations for the coming day which every street and almost every house displayed; and thinking, now and then, that it seemed rather hard that so many people of all ranks and stations could earn a living in London, and that he should be compelled to journey so far in search of

one, Nicholas speedily arrived at the Saracen's Head, Snow Hill. Having dismissed his porter, and seen the box safely deposited in the coach office, he looked into the coffee-room in search of Mr. Squeers.

He found that learned gentleman sitting at breakfast, with the three little boys before noticed, and two others who had turned up by some lucky chance since the interview of the previous day, arranged in a row on the opposite seat. Mr. Squeers had before him a small quantity of coffee, a plate of hot toast, and a cold piece of beef; but he was at that moment intent on preparing breakfast for the little boys.

"This is two pennyworth of milk, is it, waiter?" said Mr. Squeers, looking down into a large blue pot, and tipping it gently, so as to get an accurate view of the quantity of liquid contained in it.

"That's twopenn'orth, sir," said the waiter.

"What a rare article milk is, to be sure, in London!" said Mr. Squeers with a sigh. "Just fill that pot up with warm water, William, will you?"

"To the very top, sir?" inquired the waiter. "Why, the milk will be drowned."

"Never you mind that," replied Mr. Squeers. "Serve it right for being so dear. You ordered that thick bread and butter for three, did you?"

"Coming directly, sir."

"You needn't hurry yourself," said Mr. Squeers; "there's plenty of time. Conquer your passions, boys, and don't be eager for food." As he uttered this piece of moral advice, Mr. Squeers took a large bite out of the cold beef and recognized Nicholas.

"Sit down, Mr. Nickleby," said Squeers. "Here we are. breakfasting, you see."

Nicholas did *not* see that anyone was breakfasting, except Squeers; but he bowed with all due respect, and looked as cheerful as he could.

"Oh! that's the milk and water, is it, William?" said Squeers. "Very good; don't forget the bread and butter presently."

At this fresh mention of the bread and butter, the five little boys looked very eager, and followed the waiter out with their eyes; meanwhile Mr. Squeers tasted the milk and water.

"Ah!" said the gentleman, smacking his lips. "here's richness! Think of the many beggars and orphans in the streets who would be glad of this, little boys. A shocking thing hunger is, isn't it, Mr. Nickleby?"

"Very shocking, sir," said Nicholas.

"When I say number one," pursued Squeers, putting the pot before the children, "the boy on the left-hand nearest the window may take a drink; and when I say number two, the boy next to him will go in, and so till we come to number five, which is the last boy. Are you ready?"

"Yes, sir," cried all the little boys with great eagerness.

"That's right," said Squeers, calmly getting on with his breakfast; "keep ready till I tell you to begin. Overcome your appetites, my dears, and you've conquered human nature. This is the way we teach strength of mind, Mr. Nickleby," said the schoolmaster, turning to Nicholas, and speaking with his mouth very full of beef and toast.

Nicholas murmured something—he knew not what—in reply; and the little boys, dividing their gaze between the pot, the bread and butter (which had by this time arrived), and every morsel which Mr. Squeers took into his mouth, remained with strained eyes in torments of expectation.

"Thank God for a good breakfast," said Squeers, when he had finished. "Number one may take a drink."

Number one seized the pot eagerly, and had drunk just enough to make him wish for more, when Mr. Squeers gave the signal for number two, who gave up at the same interesting moment to number three; and the process was

repeated until the milk and water came to an end with number five.

"And now," said the schoolmaster, dividing the bread and butter for three into as many portions as there were children, "you had better look sharp with your breakfast, for the horn will blow in a minute or two, and then every boy leaves off."

Permission being thus given to fall to, the boys began to eat greedily, and in desperate haste; while the schoolmaster (who was in high good humour after his meal) picked his teeth with a fork and looked smilingly on. In a very short time the horn was heard.

"I thought it wouldn't be long," said Squeers, jumping up and producing a little basket from under the seat; "put what you haven't had time to eat, in here, boys! You'll want it on the road!"

Nicholas was considerably startled by these very economical arrangements; but he had no time to reflect upon them, for the little boys had to be got up to the top of the coach, and their boxes had to be brought out and put in, and Mr. Squeers's luggage was to be seen carefully placed in the box, and all these offices were in his department. He was in the full heat and bustle of concluding these operations, when his uncle, Mr. Ralph Nickleby, spoke to him.

"Oh! here you are, sir!" said Ralph. "Here are your mother and sister, sir."

"Where?" cried Nicholas, looking hastily round.

"Here!" replied his uncle. "Having too much money and nothing at all to do with it, they were paying a cab as I came up, sir."

"We were afraid of being too late to see him before he went away from us," said Mrs. Nickleby, embracing her son, careless of the unconcerned lookers-on in the coach-yard.

"Very good, ma'am," returned Ralph. "You're the best



"We were afraid of being too late . . ."

judge, of course. I merely said that you were paying a cab. *I* never pay a cab, ma'am, I never hire one. I haven't been in a cab of my own hiring for thirty years, and I hope I shan't be for thirty years more, if I live as long."

"I should never have forgiven myself if I had not seen him," said Mrs. Nickleby. "Poor, dear boy—going away without his breakfast too, because he feared to distress us!"

"Mighty fine, certainly!" said Ralph with great irritation. "When I first went to business, ma'am, I took a penny loaf and a ha'porth of milk for my breakfast as I walked to the city every morning; what do you say to that, ma'am? Breakfast! Bah!"

"Now, Nickleby," said Squeers, coming up at the moment buttoning his coat; "I think you'd better get up behind. I'm afraid of one of them boys falling off, and then there's twenty pound a year gone."

"Dear Nicholas," whispered Kate, touching her brother's arm. "who is that vulgar man?"

"Eh!" growled Ralph, whose quick ears had caught the inquiry. "Do you wish to be introduced to Mr. Squeers, my dear?"

"That the schoolmaster! No, uncle. Oh, no!" replied Kate, shrinking back.

"I'm sure I heard you say as much, my dear," retorted Ralph in his cold sarcastic manner. "Mr. Squeers, here's my niece, Nicholas's sister!"

"Very glad to make your acquaintance, miss," said Squeers, raising his hat an inch or two. "I wish Mrs. Squeers took girls, and we had you for a teacher. I don't know though, whether she mightn't grow jealous if we had. Ha! ha! ha!"

If the owner of Dotheboys Hall could have known what was passing in his assistant's breast at that moment, he would have discovered, with some surprise, that he was as near being soundly punched as he had ever been in his life.

Kate Nickleby, having a quicker perception of her brother's emotions, led him gently aside, and thus prevented Mr. Squeers from being impressed with the fact in a particularly disagreeable manner.

"My dear Nicholas," said the young lady, "who is this man? What kind of place can it be that you are going to?"

"I hardly know, Kate," replied Nicholas, pressing his sister's hand. "I suppose the Yorkshire folks are rather rough and uncultivated; that's all."

"But this person," urged Kate.

"Is my employer, or master, or whatever the proper name may be," replied Nicholas quickly, "and I was an ass to take his coarseness ill. They are looking this way and it is time I was in my place. Bless you, love, and good-bye! Mother, look forward to our meeting again some day! Uncle, farewell! Thank you heartily for all you have done and all you mean to do. Quite ready, sir!"

With these hasty farewells, Nicholas mounted nimbly to his seat, and waved his hand gallantly as if his heart went with it.

At this moment, when the coachman and guard were comparing notes for the last time before starting; when porters were screwing out the last unwilling sixpences, wandering newsmen making the last offer of a morning paper, and the horses giving the last impatient rattle to their harness; Nicholas felt somebody pulling softly at his leg. He looked down, and there stood Newman Noggs, who pushed up into his hand a dirty letter.

"What's this?" inquired Nicholas.

"Hush!" rejoined Noggs, pointing to Mr. Ralph Nickleby, who was saying a few earnest words to Squeers, a short distance off. "Take it. Read it. Nobody knows. That's all."

"Stop!" cried Nicholas.

"No," replied Noggs.

Nicholas cried stop again, but Newman Noggs was gone.

A minute's bustle, a banging of the coach doors, a swaying of the vehicle to one side, as the heavy coachman and the still heavier guard, climbed into their seats; a cry of all right, a few notes from the horn, a hasty glance of two sorrowful faces below, and the hard features of Mr. Ralph Nickleby—and the coach was gone too, and rattling over the stones of Smithfield.

The little boys' legs being too short to admit of their feet resting on anything as they sat, and the little boys' bodies being consequently in immediate danger of being thrown off the coach, Nicholas had enough to do, over the stones, to hold them on. His hands were so busy and his mind so anxious about this task, that he was not a little relieved when the coach stopped at the Peacock at Islington. He was still more relieved when a hearty-looking gentleman, with a very good-humoured face, and a very fresh colour, got up behind, and proposed to take the other corner of the seat.

"If we put some of these youngsters in the middle," said the newcomer, "they'll be safer in case of their going to sleep; eh?"

"If you'll have the goodness, sir," replied Squeers, "that'll be the very thing. Mr. Nickleby, take three of them boys between you and the gentleman. Belling and the youngest Snawley can sit between me and the guard. Three children," said Squeers, explaining to the stranger, "books as two."

"I have not the least objection, I am sure," said the fresh-coloured gentleman; "I have a brother who wouldn't object to book his six children as two at any butcher's or baker's in the kingdom, I dare say. Far from it."

"Six children, sir?" exclaimed Squeers.

"Yes, and all boys," replied the stranger.

"Mr. Nickleby," said Squeers, in great haste, "catch

hold of that basket. Let me give you a card, sir, of a school where those boys can be brought up in an enlightened, liberal, and moral manner, with no mistake at all about it, for twenty guineas a year each—twenty guineas, sir—or I'd take all the boys together upon an average right through, and say a hundred pound a year for the lot."

"Oh!" said the gentleman, glancing at the card, "you are the Mr. Squeers mentioned here, I presume?"

"Yes, I am, sir," replied the worthy schoolmaster; "Mr. Wackford Squeers is my name, and I'm very far from being ashamed of it. These are some of my boys, sir; that's one of my assistants, sir—Mr. Nickleby, a gentleman's son, and a good scholar, mathematical, classical and commercial. We don't do things by halves at our shop. All manner of learning my boys take down, sir; the expense is never thought of; and they get fatherly treatment and washing in."

"Upon my word," said the gentleman with a half smile and more than half expression of surprise, "these are advantages indeed."

"You may say that, sir," answered Squeers, thrusting his hands into his greatcoat pockets. "The highest references are given and required. I wouldn't take a reference with any boy, that wasn't responsible for the payment of five pound five a quarter, no, not if you went down on your knees, and asked me, with the tears running down your face, to do it."

"Highly considerate," said the passenger.

"It's my aim and end to be considerate, sir," replied Squeers. "Snawley, junior, if you don't leave off chattering your teeth and shaking with the cold, I'll warm you with a severe thrashing in about half a minute's time."

"Sit fast here, gentlemen," said the guard as he climbed up.

"All right behind there, Dick?" cried the coachman.

"All right," was the reply. "Off she goes!" and off she did go—if coaches are feminine—amidst a loud flourish from the guard's horn, and the calm approval of all the judges of coaches and coach-horses, gathered at the Peacock, but more especially of the helpers, who stood, with the cloths over their arms, watching the coach till it disappeared, and then strolled admiringly towards the stable, praising its beauty.

When the guard (who was a stout old Yorkshireman) had blown himself quite out of breath, he put the horn into a little tunnel of a basket fastened to the coach side for the purpose, and giving himself a plentiful shower of blows on the chest and shoulders, observed it was uncommon cold; after which, he demanded of every person separately whether he was going right through, and if not where he *was* going. Satisfactory replies being made to these questions, he guessed that the roads were pretty heavy after that fall of snow last night, and took the liberty of asking whether any of the gentlemen carried a snuff-box. It happening that nobody did, he remarked with a mysterious air that he had heard a medical gentleman that went down to Grantham last week, say that snuff-taking was bad for the eyes; but that for his part he had never found it so, and what he said was, that everybody should speak as they found. Nobody attempting to contradict this, he took a small brown-paper parcel out of his hat, and putting on a pair of glasses (the writing being bad) read the address half a dozen times over; having done which he returned the parcel to its old place, put up his glasses again, and stared at everybody in turn. After this he took another blow at the horn by way of refreshment; and, having now exhausted his usual topics of conversation, folded his arms as well as he could in so many coats, and falling into a solemn silence, looked carelessly at the familiar objects which met his eye on every side as the coach rolled on; the only things

he seemed to care for being horses and cattle, which he examined with a critical air as they were passed upon the road.

The weather was intensely and bitterly cold; a great deal of snow fell from time to time; and the wind was unbearably keen. Mr. Squeers got down at every stage—to stretch his legs as he said—and as he always came back from such excursions with a very red nose, and settled down to sleep directly, there is reason to suppose that he obtained great benefit from the process. The little pupils having been encouraged with the remains of their breakfast, and further cheered by several small cups of a curious drink carried by Mr. Squeers, which tasted very like toast-and-water put into a brandy bottle by mistake, went to sleep, woke, shivered and cried, as their feelings prompted. Nicholas and the good-tempered man found so many things to talk about, that between conversing together and cheering up the boys, the time passed with them as rapidly as it could under such unfavourable circumstances.

So the day wore on. At Eton Slocomb there was a good coach dinner, which the box, the four front outsides, the one inside, Nicholas, the good-tempered man, and Mr. Squeers ate; while the five little boys were put to thaw by the fire, and fed with sandwiches. A stage or two farther on, the lamps were lighted, and a great to-do caused by the taking up, at a roadside inn, of a very fussy lady with an enormous variety of coats and small parcels, who loudly regretted, for the benefit of the outsides, the non-arrival of her own carriage which was to have taken her on, and made the guard solemnly promise to stop every green carriage he saw coming; which, as it was a dark night and he was sitting with his face the other way, that officer undertook, with many warm assurances, to do. Finally, the fussy lady, finding there was a gentleman alone inside, had a small lamp lighted which she carried in her bag, and being after

much trouble shut in, the horses were put into a brisk trot and the coach was once more in rapid motion.

The night and the snow came on together, and dismal enough they were. There was no sound to be heard but the howling of the wind; for the noise of the wheels and the tread of the horses' feet were rendered noiseless by the thick coating of snow which covered the ground and was fast increasing every moment. The streets of Stamford were



The night and the snow came on together

deserted as they passed through the town; and its old churches rose frowning and dark, from the whitened ground. Twenty miles farther on, two of the front outside passengers, wisely taking the opportunity of their arrival at one of the best inns in England, turned in, for the night, at the George at Grantham. The remainder wrapped themselves more closely in their coats and cloaks, and leaving the light and warmth of the town behind them, pillowed themselves against the luggage, and prepared with many half-suppressed groans again to encounter the piercing blast which swept across the open country.

They were little more than a stage out of Grantham or about half-way between it and Newark, when Nicholas, who had been asleep for a short time, was suddenly roused by a sharp jerk which nearly threw him from his seat. Grasping the rail, he found that the coach had sunk greatly on one side, though it was still dragged forward by the horses; and while—confused by their plunging and the loud screams of the lady inside—he hesitated, for an instant, whether to jump off or not, the vehicle turned easily over, and relieved him from any further uncertainty by throwing him into the road.

CHAPTER VI

How they waited at the Inn.

"WHAT HO!" cried the guard, on his legs in a minute, and running to the leaders' heads. "Is there any gentleman there that can lend a hand here? Keep quiet, dang you! What ho!"

"What's the matter?" demanded Nicholas, looking sleepily up.

"Matter, man, matter enough for one night," replied the guard; "dang that horse, he's gone mad with glory, I think, because the coach is over. Here, can't you lend a hand? Damn it, I'd have done it if all my bones were broken."

"Here!" cried Nicholas, staggering to his feet. "I'm ready. I'm only a little dazed, that's all."

"Hold 'em tight," cried the guard, "while I cut the harness. Hang on to 'em somehow. Well done, my lad. That's it. Let 'em go now. Dang 'em, they'll go home fast enough."

In truth, the animals were no sooner released than they trotted back, with much deliberation, to the stable they had just left, which was distant not a mile behind.

"Can you blow a horn?" asked the guard, taking off one of the coach lamps.

"I dare say I can," replied Nicholas.

"Then just blow away into that one that's lying on the ground fit to waken the dead, will you," said the man, "while I stop some of this screaming inside. Coming, coming. Don't make that noise, woman."

As the man spoke he proceeded to pull open the uppermost door of the coach, while Nicholas, seizing the horn, awoke the echoes far and wide with one of the most extraordinary performances on that instrument ever heard by mortal ears. It had its effect however, not only in rousing such of the passengers as were recovering from the stunning effects of their fall, but in bringing them help; for lights gleamed in the distance and people were already stirring.

In fact, a man on horseback galloped down before the passengers were well collected together; and careful inquiries being started, it appeared that the lady inside had broken her lamp, and the gentleman his head; that the two front outsides had escaped with black eyes; the box with a bloody nose; the coachman with a bruise on the face; Mr. Squeers with a bruise on his back; and the remaining passengers without any injury at all—thanks to the softness of the snowdrift in which they had been overturned. These facts were no sooner thoroughly understood than the lady gave several signs of fainting, but being forewarned that if she did, she must be carried on some gentleman's shoulders to the nearest public-house, she prudently thought better of it, and walked back with the rest.

They found on reaching it that it was a lonely place with no very great accommodation in the way of rooms—its resources being all included in one public room with a

sanded floor, and a chair or two. However, a large piece of wood and a plentiful supply of coals being heaped upon the fire, the appearance of things was not long in mending; and, by the time they had washed off all the marks that would wash off of the late accident, the room was warm and light, which was a most agreeable exchange for the cold and darkness out of doors.

"Well, Mr. Nickleby," said Squeers, pushing himself into the warmest corner, "you did very right to catch hold of them horses. I should have done it myself if I had come to in time, but I am very glad you did it. You did it very well; very well."

"So well," said the merry-faced gentleman, who did not seem to approve very much of the superior, condescending tone adopted by Squeers, "that if they had not been held when they were, you would probably have had no brains left to teach with."

This remark called up a conversation about the quickness Nicholas had shown, and he was overwhelmed with praise and compliments.

"I am very glad to have escaped, of course," observed Squeers; "every man is glad when he escapes from danger; but if any one of my charges had been hurt—if I had been prevented from restoring any one of these little boys to his parents whole and sound as I received him—what would have been my feelings? Why the wheel on top of my head would have been far preferable to it."

"Are they all brothers, sir?" inquired the lady who had carried the "Davy" or safety-lamp.

"In one sense they are, ma'am," replied Squeers, diving into his greatcoat pocket for cards. "They are all under the same parental and affectionate treatment. Mrs. Squeers and myself are a mother and father to every one of 'em. Mr. Nickleby, hand the lady them cards, and offer these to the gentleman. Perhaps they might know of some parents

that would be glad to avail themselves of the establishment."

Expressing himself to this effect, Mr. Squeers, who lost no opportunity of free advertising, placed his hands upon his knees, and looked at the pupils with as much benevolence as he could possibly pretend, while Nicholas, blushing with shame, handed round the cards as directed.

"I hope you suffer no inconvenience from the overturn, ma'am?" said the merry-faced gentleman, addressing the fussy lady, as though he were kindly desirous to change the subject.

"No bodily inconvenience," replied the lady.

"No mental inconvenience, I hope?"

"The subject is a very painful one to my feelings, sir," replied the lady with strong emotion; "and I beg you as a gentleman, not to refer to it."

"Dear me," said the merry-faced gentleman, looking merrier still, "I merely intended to inquire——"

"I hope no inquiries will be made," said the lady, "or I shall be compelled to throw myself on the protection of the other gentlemen. Landlord, pray direct a boy to keep watch outside the door—and if a green carriage passes in the direction of Grantham, to stop it instantly."

The people of the house were evidently overcome by this request, and when the lady told the boy to remember, as a means of identifying the expected green carriage, that it would have a coachman with a gold-laced hat on the box and a footman, most probably in silk stockings, behind, the attentions of the good woman of the inn were redoubled. Even the box passenger caught the infection, and growing wonderfully respectful, immediately inquired whether there was not very good society in that neighbourhood, to which the lady replied yes, there was: in a manner which sufficiently implied that she moved at the very tip-top and summit of it all.

"As the guard has gone to Grantham to get another coach," said the good-tempered gentleman when they had all been sitting round the fire for some time, in silence, "and as he may be gone for a couple of hours at the very least, I propose a bowl of hot punch. What say you, sir?"

This question was addressed to the broken-headed inside, who was a man of very respectable appearance, dressed in black. He was not past middle age, but his hair was grey; it seemed to have been turned early by care or sorrow. He readily agreed to the proposal, and seemed to like the frank good nature of the man from whom it came.

This latter, when the punch was ready, gave it out all round, and then led the conversation to the antiquities of York, with which both he and the grey-haired gentleman appeared to be well acquainted. When this subject appeared to be exhausted, he turned with a smile to the grey-headed gentleman, and asked if he could sing.

"I cannot indeed," replied the gentleman, smiling in his turn.

"That's a pity," said the owner of the good-humoured face. "Is there nobody here who can sing a song to lighten the time?"

The passengers, one and all, protested that they could not; that they wished they could; that they couldn't remember the words of anything without the book, and so on.

"Perhaps the lady would not object," said the president, with great respect, and a merry twinkle in his eye. "Some little Italian thing out of the last opera brought out in town, would be most acceptable, I am sure."

As the lady was too proud to make any reply, but tossed her head contemptuously, and murmured some further expression of surprise regarding the absence of the green carriage, one or two voices urged upon the president himself, how fitting it was that he should make an attempt for the general benefit.

"I would if I could," said he of the good-tempered face; "for I hold that in this, as in all other cases where people who are strangers to each other are thrown unexpectedly together, they should endeavour to make themselves as pleasant, for the joint sake of the little community, as possible."

"I wish the belief were more generally acted on, in all cases," said the grey-headed gentleman.

"The fresh coach is ready, ladies and gentlemen, if you please," said a new driver, looking in.

This intelligence caused the punch to be finished in a great hurry. The journey was then resumed. Nicholas fell asleep, towards morning, and, when he awoke, found, with great regret, that, during his nap, both the cheerful gentleman and the grey-haired one had got down and were gone. The day dragged on uncomfortably enough. At about six o'clock that night, he and Mr. Squeers, and the little boys, and their united luggage, were all put down together at the George and New Inn, Greta Bridge.

CHAPTER VII

Mr. and Mrs. Squeers at home.

MR. SQUEERS, being safely landed, left Nicholas and the boys standing with the luggage in the road, to amuse themselves by looking at the coach as it changed horses, while he ran into the tavern and went through the leg-stretching process at the bar. After some minutes, he returned, with his legs thoroughly stretched, if the colour of his nose and a short hiccup were anything to go by; and at the same time there came out of the

yard a pony-cart and a hand-cart, driven by two labouring men.

"Put the boys and the boxes into the hand-cart," said Squeers, rubbing his hands; "and this young man and me will go on in the pony-cart. Get in, Nickleby."

Nicholas obeyed. Mr. Squeers with some difficulty persuading the pony to obey also, they started off, leaving the cart-load of infant misery to follow at leisure.

"Are you cold, Nickleby?" inquired Squeers, after they had travelled some distance in silence.

"Rather, sir, I must say."

"Well, I don't find fault with that," said Squeers; "it's a long journey this weather."

"Is it much farther to Dotheboys Hall, sir?" asked Nicholas.

"About three mile from here," replied Squeers. "But you needn't call it a Hall down here."

Nicholas coughed, as if he would like to know why.

"The fact is, it isn't a Hall," observed Squeers drily.

"Oh, indeed!" said Nicholas, whom this piece of intelligence much astonished.

"No," replied Squeers. "We call it a Hall up in London, because it sounds better, but they don't know it by that name in these parts. A man may call his house an island if he likes; there's no act of Parliament against that, I believe?"

"I believe not, sir," answered Nicholas.

Squeers gave his companion a cunning look, at the conclusion of this little dialogue, and finding that he had grown thoughtful and appeared in no way disposed to offer any observations, contented himself with lashing the pony until they reached their journey's end.

"Jump out," said Squeers. "Hallo there! come and put this horse up. Be quick, will you!"

While the schoolmaster was uttering these and other

impatient cries, Nicholas had time to observe that the school was a long, cold-looking house, one storey high, with a few scattered outbuildings behind, and a barn and stable adjoining. After the lapse of a minute or two, the noise of somebody unlocking the yard gate was heard, and presently a tall lean boy, with a lantern in his hand, came out.

"Is that you, Smike?" cried Squeers.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy.

"Then why the devil didn't you come before?"

"Please, sir, I fell asleep over the fire," answered Smike, with humility.

"Fire! What fire? Where's there a fire?" demanded the schoolmaster sharply.

"Only in the kitchen, sir," replied the boy. "Mistress said as I was sitting up, I might go in there for a warm."

"Your mistress is a fool," retorted Squeers. "You'd have been a good deal more wakeful in the cold, I'll swear."

By this time Mr. Squeers had dismounted; and after ordering the boy to see to the pony, and to take care that he hadn't any more corn that night, he told Nicholas to wait at the front door a minute while he went round and let him in.

A host of unpleasant doubts, which had been crowding upon Nicholas during the whole journey, crowded into his mind with redoubled force when he was left alone. His great distance from home and the impossibility of reaching it, except on foot, should he feel ever so anxious to return, presented itself to him in most alarming colours; and as he looked at the dreary house and dark windows, and upon the wild country round, covered with snow, he felt a depression of heart and spirit which he had never experienced before.

"Now then!" cried Squeers, poking his head out at the front door. "Where are you, Nickleby?"

"Here, sir," replied Nicholas.

"Come in, then," said Squeers, "the wind blows in at this door, fit to knock a man off his legs."

Nicholas sighed and hurried in. Mr. Squeers, having bolted the door to keep it shut, showed him into a small parlour scantily furnished with a few chairs, a yellow map hung against the wall, and a couple of tables; one of which bore some preparations for supper; while, on the other, a couple of school books, half a dozen cards of terms, and a worn letter directed to Wackford Squeers, Esquire, were arranged in picturesque confusion.

They had not been in this room a couple of minutes, when a female bounced into the room, and, seizing Mr. Squeers by the throat, gave him two loud kisses: one close after the other, like knocking on a door. The lady, who was of a large awkward figure, was about half a head taller than Mr. Squeers, and was dressed in a night-jacket; with her hair in curl papers; she had also a dirty night-cap on, relieved by a yellow cotton handkerchief which tied it under the chin.

"How is my Squeery?" said this lady in a playful manner, and a very hoarse voice.

"Quite well, my love," replied Squeers. "How's the cows?"

"All right, every one of 'em," answered the lady.

"And the pigs?" said Squeers.

"As well as they were when you went away."

"Come; that's a blessing," said Squeers, pulling off his greatcoat. "The boys are all as they were, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, they're well enough," replied Mrs. Squeers snappishly. "That young Pitcher's had a fever."

"No!" exclaimed Squeers. "Damn that boy, he's always at something of that sort."

"Never was such a boy, I do believe," said Mrs. Squeers; "whatever he has is always catching too. I say it's obstinacy, and nothing shall ever convince me that it isn't. I'd

beat it out of him; and I told you that, six months ago."

"So you did, my love," replied Squeers. "We'll try what can be done."

During these little endearments, Nicholas had stood, awkwardly enough, in the middle of the room: not very well knowing whether he was expected to retire into the passage, or to remain where he was. He was now relieved from his embarrassment by Mr. Squeers.

"This is the new young man, my dear," said that gentleman.

"Oh," replied Mrs. Squeers, nodding her head at Nicholas and eyeing him coldly from top to toe.

"He'll take a meal with us to-night," said Squeers, "and go among the boys to-morrow morning. You can give him a shake-down here to-night, can't you?"

"We must manage it somehow," replied the lady. "You don't much mind how you sleep, I suppose, sir?"

"No, indeed," replied Nicholas. "I'm not particular."

"That's lucky," said Mrs. Squeers. And as the lady's humour was considered to lie chiefly in retort, Mr. Squeers laughed heartily and seemed to expect that Nicholas should do the same.

After some further conversation between the master and mistress relative to the success of Mr. Squeers's trip, and the people who had paid, and the people who had not paid, a young servant girl brought in a Yorkshire pie and some cold beef, which being set on the table, the boy Smike appeared with a jug of ale.



*The boy Smike
appeared with a
jug of ale*

Mr. Squeers was emptying his greatcoat pockets of letters to different boys, and other small documents, which he had brought down in them. The boy glanced, with an anxious and timid expression, at the papers, as if with a sickly hope that one among them might relate to him. The look was a very painful one, and went to Nicholas's heart at once; for it told a long and very sad history.

It caused him to consider the boy more attentively, and he was surprised to observe the extraordinary mixture of garments which formed his dress. Although he could not have been less than eighteen or nineteen years old, and was tall for that age, he wore a skeleton suit, such as is usually put upon very little boys, and which, though most absurdly short in the arms and legs, was quite wide enough for his starved frame. In order that the lower part of his legs might be in perfect keeping with this singular dress, he had a very large pair of boots which were now too patched and worn-out for a beggar. Heaven knows how long he had been there, but he still wore the same linen which he had first brought with him; for, round his neck, was a worn-out child's collar, only half concealed by a coarse man's neckerchief. He was lame; and as he pretended to be busy in arranging the table, glanced at the letters with a look so keen, and yet so dispirited and hopeless, that Nicholas could hardly bear to watch him.

"What are you bothering about there, Smike?" cried Mrs. Squeers; "let the things alone, can't you?"

"Eh!" said Squeers, looking up. "Oh! it's you, is it?"

"Yes, sir," replied the youth, pressing his hands together as though to control, by force, the nervous wanderings of his fingers. "Is there——"

"Well!" said Squeers.

"Have you—did anybody—has nothing been heard—about me?"

"Devil a bit," replied Squeers irritably.

The lad withdrew his eyes, and, putting his hand to his face, moved towards the door.

"Not a word," resumed Squeers, "and never will be. Now, this a pretty sort of thing. isn't it, that you should have been left here, all these years, and no money paid after the first six—nor no notice taken, nor no clue to be got who you belong to? It's a pretty sort of thing that I should have to feed a great fellow like you, and never hope to get a penny for it, isn't it?"

The boy put his hand to his head as if he were making an effort to recollect something, and then, looking vacantly at his questioner, gradually broke into a smile, and limped away.

"I'll tell you what, Squeers," remarked his wife, as the door closed, "I think that young chap's turning silly."

"I hope not," said the schoolmaster; "for he's a handy fellow out of doors, and worth his meat and drink, anyway. I should think he'd have wit enough for us though, if he was. But come; let's have supper, for I am hungry and tired, and want to get to bed."

This reminder brought in an exclusive steak for Mr. Squeers, who speedily proceeded to do it ample justice. Nicholas drew up his chair, but his appetite was effectively taken away.

"How's the steak, Squeers?" said Mrs. S.

"Tender as a lamb," replied Squeers. "Have a bit."

"I couldn't eat a morsel," replied his wife. "What'll the young man take, my dear?"

"Whatever he likes that's present," answered Squeers, in a most unusual burst of generosity.

"What do you say, Mr. Knuckleboy?" inquired Mrs. Squeers.

"I'll take a little of the pie, if you please," replied Nicholas. "A very little, for I'm not hungry."

"Well, it's a pity to cut the pie, if you're not hungry,

isn't it?" said Mrs. Squeers. "Will you try a bit of the beef?"

"Whatever you please," replied Nicholas absently; "it's all the same to me."

Mrs. Squeers looked vastly gracious on receiving this reply; and nodding to Squeers as much as to say that she was glad to find the young man knew his station, assisted Nicholas to a slice of meat with her own fair hands.

"Ale, Squeery?" inquired the lady, winking and frowning, to give him to understand that the question was, whether Nicholas should have ale, and not whether he (Squeers) would take any.

"Certainly," said Squeers, re-telegraphing in the same manner. "A glassful."

So Nicholas had a glassful, and, being occupied with his own reflections, drank it, in happy innocence of all foregone proceedings.

"Uncommon juicy steak that," said Squeers, as he laid down his knife and fork, after plying it, in silence, for some time.

"It's prime meat," answered his lady. "I bought a good large piece of it myself on purpose for——"

"For what!" exclaimed Squeers hastily. "Not for the——"

"No, no, not for them," replied Mrs. Squeers; "on purpose for you against you came home. Lor! you didn't think I could have made such a mistake as that."

"Upon my word, my dear, I didn't know what you were going to say," said Squeers, who had turned pale.

"You needn't make yourself uncomfortable," remarked his wife, laughing heartily. "To think that I should be such a silly! Well!"

This part of the conversation was rather difficult to understand; but popular rumour in the neighbourhood asserted that Mr. Squeers, being amiably opposed to cruelty

to animals, not infrequently purchased for boy consumption the bodies of horned cattle who had died a natural death; possibly he was afraid of having unintentionally eaten some choice morsel intended for the young gentlemen.

Supper being over, and removed by a small servant girl with a hungry eye, Mrs. Squeers retired to lock it up, and also to take into safe custody the clothes of the five boys who had just arrived, and who were half-way up the troublesome flight of steps which leads to death's door, in consequence of exposure to the cold. They were then feasted with a light supper of porridge, and tucked away, side by side, in a small bed, to warm each other, and dream of a substantial meal, with something hot after it, if their fancies set that way, which it is not at all improbable they did.

Mr. Squeers treated himself to a stiff glass of brandy and water, made on the generous half-and-half principle, allowing for the melting of the sugar; and his amiable wife gave Nicholas the ghost of a small glassful of the same mixture. This done, Mr. and Mrs. Squeers drew close up to the fire, and sitting with their feet on the fender, talked confidentially in whispers; while Nicholas, taking up one of the school books, read the interesting things in the miscellaneous questions, and all the figures into the bargain, with as much thought or consciousness of what he was doing, as if he had been fast asleep.

At length Mr. Squeers yawned fearfully, and said that it was high time to go to bed; upon which signal Mrs. Squeers and the girl dragged in a small mattress and a couple of blankets, and arranged them into a couch for Nicholas.

"We'll put you into your regular bedroom to-morrow, Nickleby," said Squeers. "Let me see! Who sleeps in Brooks's bed, my dear?"

"In Brooks's," said Mrs. Squeers, thinking. "There's

Jennings, little Bolder, Greymarsh, and what's-his-name."

"So there is," rejoined Squeers. "Yes! Brooks is full."

"Full!" thought Nicholas. "I should think he was."

"There's a place somewhere, I know," said Squeers; "but I can't at this moment call to mind where it is. However, we'll have that all settled to-morrow. Good night, Nickleby. Seven o'clock in the morning, mind."

"I shall be ready, sir," replied Nicholas. "Good night."

"I'll come in myself and show you where the well is," said Squeers. "You'll always find a little bit of soap in the kitchen window; that belongs to you."

Nicholas opened his eyes, but not his mouth; and Squeers was again going away, when he once more turned back.

"I don't know, I am sure," he said, "whose towel to put you on; but if you'll make shift with something to-morrow morning, Mrs. Squeers will arrange that, in the course of the day. My dear, don't forget."

"I'll take care," replied Mrs. Squeers; "and mind you take care, young man, and get first wash. The teacher ought always to have it; but they get the better of him if they can."

Mr. Squeers then poked Mrs. Squeers to remind her to bring away the brandy bottle, lest Nicholas should help himself in the night; and the lady having seized it with great haste, they retired together.

Nicholas, being left alone, took half a dozen turns up and down the room, in a condition of much agitation and excitement, but, growing gradually calmer, sat himself down in a chair, and mentally resolved that, come what might, he would endeavour, for a time, to bear whatever misery might be in store for him, and that, remembering the helplessness of his mother and sister, he would give his uncle no excuse for deserting them in their need. Good resolutions seldom fail of producing some good effect in the

mind from which they spring. He grew less hopeless, and—so cheerful and buoyant is youth—even hoped that affairs at Dotheboys Hall might yet prove better than they promised.

He was preparing for bed, with something like renewed cheerfulness, when a sealed letter fell from his coat pocket. In the hurry of leaving London, it had escaped his attention, and had not occurred to him since, but it at once brought back to him the recollection of the mysterious behaviour of Newman Noggs.

"Dear me!" said Nicholas, "what an extraordinary hand!"

It was directed to himself, was written upon very dirty paper, and in such crippled writing as to be almost unreadable. After great difficulty and much puzzling, he contrived to read as follows:

MY DEAR YOUNG MAN,

I know the world. Your father did not, or he would not have done me a kindness when there was no hope of return. You do not, or you would not be bound on such a journey.

If ever you want a shelter in London (don't be angry at this, I once thought I never should), they know where I live, at the sign of the Crown, in Silver Street, Golden Square. It is at the corner of Silver Street and James Street, with a bar door both ways. You can come at night. Once, nobody was ashamed—never mind that. It's all over.

Excuse errors. I should forget how to wear a whole coat now. I have forgotten all my old ways. My spelling may have gone with them.

NEWMAN NOGGS.

PS.—If you should go near Barnard Castle, there is

good ale at the King's Head. Say you know me, and I am sure they will not charge you for it. You may say Mr. Noggs there, for I was a gentleman then. I was indeed.

It may be a very undignified circumstance to record, but after he had folded this letter and placed it in his pocket-book, Nicholas Nickleby's eyes were dimmed with a moisture that might have been taken for tears.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the internal economy of Dotheboys Hall.

A RIDE of two hundred and odd miles in severe weather is one of the best softeners of a hard bed than can be thought of. Perhaps it is even a sweetener of dreams, for those which hovered over the rough couch of Nicholas, and whispered their airy nothings in his ear, were of an agreeable and happy kind. He was making his fortune very fast indeed, when the faint gleam of a dying candle shone before his eyes, and a voice he had no difficulty in recognizing as part and parcel of Mr. Squeers, warned him that it was time to rise.

"Past seven, Nickleby," said Mr. Squeers.

"Has morning come already?" asked Nicholas, sitting up in bed.

"Ah! that has it," replied Squeers, "and ready iced too. Now, Nickleby, come; tumble up, will you?"

Nicholas needed no further calling, but "tumbled up" at once, and proceeded to dress himself by the light of the candle which Mr. Squeers carried in his hand.

"Here's a pretty go," said the gentleman; "the pump's froze."

"Indeed!" said Nicholas, not much interested in the intelligence.

"Yes," replied Squeers. "You can't wash yourself this morning."

"Not wash myself!" exclaimed Nicholas.

"Not a bit of it," answered Squeers sharply. "So you must be content with giving yourself a dry polish till we break the ice in the well, and can get a bucketful out for the boys. Don't stand staring at me, but do look sharp, will you?"

Offering no further observation, Nicholas huddled on his clothes. Squeers, meanwhile, opened the shutters and blew the candle out; when the voice of his amiable wife was heard in the passage, demanding admission.

"Come in, my love," said Squeers.

Mrs. Squeers came in, still dressed in the primitive night-jacket which had displayed the shapeliness of her figure on the previous night, and further ornamented with a fur hat of some antiquity, which she wore, with much ease and lightness, on the top of the night-cap before mentioned.

"Drat the things," said the lady, opening the cupboard; "I can't find the school spoon anywhere."

"Never mind it, my dear," observed Squeers in a soothing manner; "it's of no consequence."

"No consequence, why how you talk!" retorted Mrs. Squeers, sharply; "isn't it sulphur morning?"

"I forgot, my dear," replied Squeers; "yes, it certainly is. We purify the boys' blood now and then, Nickleby."

"Purify fiddlesticks' ends," said his lady. "Don't think, young man, that we go to the expense of sulphur and treacle, just to purify them; because if you think we carry on the business in that way, you'll find yourself mistaken, and so I tell you plainly."

"My dear," said Squeers, frowning. "Hem!"

"Oh! nonsense," retorted Mrs. Squeers. "If the young man comes to be a teacher here, let him understand, at once, that we don't want any foolishness about the boys. They have the sulphur and treacle, partly because if they hadn't something or other in the way of medicine they'd be always ill and giving a world of trouble, and partly because it spoils their appetites and comes cheaper than breakfast and dinner. So it does them good and us good at the same time, and that's fair enough, I'm sure."

Having given this explanation, Mrs. Squeers put her hand into the cupboard and started a stricter search for the spoon, in which Mr. Squeers assisted. A few words passed between them while they were thus engaged, but as their voices were partly stifled by the cupboard, all that Nicholas could distinguish was, that Mr. Squeers said what Mrs. Squeers had said, was unwise, and that Mrs. Squeers said what Mr. Squeers said, was "stuff."

A vast deal of searching and hunting followed, and, it proving fruitless, Smike was called in, and pushed by Mrs. Squeers, and boxed by Mr. Squeers; which course of treatment brightening his intelligence, enabled him to suggest that possibly Mrs. Squeers might have the spoon in her pocket, as indeed turned out to be the case. As Mrs. Squeers had previously protested, however, that she was quite certain she had not got it, Smike received another box on the ear for presuming to contradict his mistress, together with a promise of a sound thrashing if he were not more respectful in future; so that he took nothing very advantageous by his notion.

"A most invaluable woman, that, Nickleby," said Squeers when his wife had hurried away, pushing the drudge before her.

"Indeed, sir!" observed Nicholas.

"I don't know her equal," said Squeers; "I do not know

her equal. That woman, Nickleby, is always the same—always the same bustling, lively, active saving creature that you see her now.”

Nicholas sighed involuntarily at the thought of the agreeable domestic future thus opened to him; but Squeers was, fortunately, too much occupied with his own reflections to perceive it.

“It’s my way to say, when I am up in London,” continued Squeers, “that to them boys she is a mother. But she is more than a mother to them; ten times more. She does things for them boys, Nickleby, that I don’t believe half the mothers going, would do for their own sons.”

“I should think they would not, sir,” answered Nicholas.

Now, the fact was, that both Mr. and Mrs. Squeers viewed the boys in the light of their proper and natural enemies; or, in other words, they held and considered that their business and profession was to get as much from every boy as could by possibility be screwed out of him. On this point they were both agreed, and behaved as one accordingly. The only difference between them was, that Mrs. Squeers waged war against the enemy openly and fearlessly, and that Squeers covered his wickedness, even at home, with a spice of his usual deceit; as if he really had a notion of some day or other being able to take himself in, and persuade his own mind that he was a very good fellow.

“But come,” said Squeers, interrupting the progress of some thoughts to this effect in the mind of his assistant, “let’s go to the school-room; and lend me a hand with my school coat, will you?”

Nicholas assisted his master to put on an old shooting-jacket, which he took down from a nail in the passage; and, Squeers, arming himself with his cane, led the way across a yard, to a door in the rear of the house.

“There,” said the schoolmaster as they stepped in together: “this is our shop, Nickleby!”

It was such a crowded scene, and there were so many objects to attract attention, that, at first, Nicholas stared about him, really without seeing anything at all. By degrees, however, the place resolved itself into a bare and dirty room, with a couple of windows, whereof a tenth part might be of glass, the remainder being stopped up with old copybooks and paper. There were a couple of long old shaky desks, cut and notched, and inked, and damaged, in every possible way; two or three forms; a separate desk for Squeers; and another for his assistant. The ceiling was supported, like that of a barn, by cross-beams and rafters; and the walls were so stained and discoloured, that it was impossible to tell whether they had ever been touched with paint or whitewash.

But the pupils—the young noblemen! How the last faint traces of hope, the most distant gleam of any good to be done by his efforts in this den, faded from the mind of Nicholas as he looked in dismay around! Pale and drawn faces, thin and bony figures, children with the appearance of old men, cripples with irons upon their limbs, undergrown boys, and others whose thin legs would hardly bear their stooping bodies, all crowded on the view together; there were the sore eyes, the split lip, the crooked foot, and every ugliness or twist that told of unnatural hatred borne by parents for their children, or of young lives which, from the earliest dawn of infancy, had been one horrible endurance of cruelty and neglect. There were little faces which should have been handsome, darkened with the frown of long-endured suffering; there was childhood with the light of its eye dimmed, its beauty gone, and its helplessness alone remaining; there were evil-faced boys, with leaden eyes, like evil-doers in a jail; and there were young creatures on whom the sins of their parents had descended, weeping even for the hired nurses they had known, and lonesome even in their loneliness. With every kindly sympathy and

affection killed at its birth, with every young and healthy feeling beaten and starved down, with every revengeful passion that can breed in swollen hearts, eating its evil way to their centre in silence, what a little Hell was growing here!

And yet this scene, painful as it was, had its queer features, which, in a less interested observer than Nicholas, might have caused a smile. Mrs. Squeers stood at one of the desks, presiding over an immense basin of sulphur and treacle, of which delicious mixture she administered a large quantity to each boy in succession; using for the purpose a huge wooden spoon, which widened every young gentleman's mouth considerably: they being all obliged, under heavy bodily penalties, to take in the whole of the bowl at a gasp.

In another corner, huddled together for companionship, were the little boys who had arrived on the previous night, three of them in very large leather breeches, and two in old trousers, a very tight fit: at no great distance from these was seated the young son and heir of Mr. Squeers—a striking likeness of his father—kicking with great vigour, under the hands of Smike, who was fitting upon him a pair of new boots that bore a most suspicious resemblance to those which the smallest of the little boys had worn on the journey down—as the little boy himself seemed to think, for he was regarding them with a look of most sorrowful amazement. Besides these, there was a long row of boys waiting, with faces of no pleasant expectation, to be treacled; and another file, who had just escaped from the ordeal, making a variety of ugly faces expressing anything but satisfaction. The whole were dressed in such various, ill-sorted extraordinary garments, as would have been irresistibly ridiculous, but for the foul appearance of dirt, disorder and disease, with which they were associated.

“Now,” said Squeers, giving the desk a great rap with his



Mrs. Squeers stood at one of the desks

cane, which made half the little boys nearly jump out of their boots, "is that doctoring over?"

"Just over," said Mrs. Squeers, choking the last boy in her hurry, and tapping the crown of his head with the wooden spoon to restore him. "Here, you, Smike; take away now. Look sharp!"

Smike shuffled out with the basin, and Mrs. Squeers

having called up a little boy with a curly head, and wiped her hands upon it, hurried out after him into a kind of wash-house, where there was a small fire and a large kettle, together with a number of little wooden bowls which were arranged upon a board.

Into these bowls, Mrs. Squeers, assisted by the hungry servant, poured a brown mess, which looked like sawdust and water, and was called porridge. A tiny slice of brown bread was inserted in each bowl, and when they had eaten their porridge by means of the bread, the boys ate the bread itself, and had finished their breakfast: whereupon Mr. Squeers said, in a solemn voice, "For what we have received, may the Lord make us truly thankful!"—and went away to his own.

Nicholas filled out his stomach with a bowl of porridge, for much the same reason which induces some savages to swallow earth—lest they should be inconveniently hungry when there is nothing to eat. Having further disposed of a slice of bread and butter, allotted to him because of his office, he sat himself down, to wait for school-time.

He could not but observe how silent and sad all the boys seemed to be. There was none of the noise and shouting of a schoolroom; none of its rough play, or hearty mirth. The children sat crouching and shivering together, and seemed to lack the spirit to move about. The only pupil who showed the slightest tendency towards movement or playfulness was Master Squeers, and as his chief amusement was to tread upon the other boys' toes in his new boots, his high spirits were rather disagreeable than otherwise.

After some half-hour's delay, Mr. Squeers reappeared, and the boys took their places and their books, of which the average might be about one to eight learners. A few minutes having passed, during which Mr. Squeers looked very profound, as if he had a perfect grasp of what was inside all the books, and could say every word of their

contents by heart if only he chose to take the trouble, that gentleman called up the first class.

Obedient to this summons there arranged themselves in front of the schoolmaster's desk, half a dozen urchins, out at knees and elbows, one of whom placed a torn and filthy book beneath his learned eye.

"This is the first class in English spelling and philosophy, Nickleby," said Squeers, summoning Nicholas to stand beside him. "We'll get up a Latin one and hand that over to you. Now, then, where's the first boy?"

"Please, sir, he's cleaning the back parlour window," said the temporary head of the philosophical class.

"So he is, to be sure," said Squeers. "We go upon the practical method of teaching, Nickleby; the regular education system. C-l-e-a-n, clean, verb, active, to make bright, to scour. W-i-n, win, d-e-r, winder, a casement. When the boy knows this out of book, he goes and does it. It's just the same principle as the use of the globes. Where's the second boy!"

"Please, sir, he's weeding the garden," replied a small voice.

"To be sure," said Squeers, by no means put out. "So he is. B-o-t, bot, t-i-n, tin, bottin, n-e-y, bottinney, noun substantive, a knowledge of plants. When he has learned that bottinney means a knowledge of plants, he goes and knows 'em. That's our system, Nickleby; what do you think of it?"

"It's a very useful one, at any rate," answered Nicholas.

"I believe you," said Squeers, not remarking the emphasis of his assistant.

"Third boy, what's a horse?"

"A beast, sir," replied the boy.

"So it is," said Squeers. "Ain't it, Nickleby?"

"I believe there is no doubt of that, sir," answered Nicholas.

"Of course there isn't," said Squeers. "A horse is a quadruped, and quadruped's Latin for beast, as everybody that's gone through the grammar knows, or else where's the use of having grammars at all?"

"Where, indeed!" said Nicholas.

"As you're perfect in that," resumed Squeers, turning to the boy, "go and look after my horse, and rub him down well, or I'll rub you down. The rest of the class go and draw water up, till somebody tells you to leave off, for it's washing-day to-morrow, and they want plenty of water."

So saying, he dismissed the first class to their experiments in practical philosophy, and eyed Nicholas with a look, half cunning and half doubtful, as if he were not altogether certain what he might think of him by this time.

"That's the way we do it, Nickleby," he said, after a pause.

Nicholas shrugged his shoulders in a manner that was scarcely perceptible, and said he saw it was.

"And a very good way it is, too," said Squeers. "Now, just take them fourteen little boys and hear them some reading, because, you know, you must begin to be useful. Idling about here, won't do."

Mr. Squeers said this, as if it had suddenly occurred to him, either that he must not say too much to his assistant, or that his assistant did not say enough to him in praise of the establishment. The children were arranged in a semi-circle round the new master, and he was soon listening to their dull, drawling, hesitating recital of those stories of wonderful interest which are to be found in the more ancient spelling books.

In this exciting occupation, the morning dragged heavily on. At one o'clock, the boys, having previously had their appetites thoroughly taken away by porridge and potatoes, sat down in the kitchen to some hard salt beef, of which Nicholas was graciously permitted to take his portion to his

own solitary desk, to eat it there in peace. After this, there was another hour of crouching in the schoolroom and shivering with cold, and then school began again.

It was Mr. Squeers's custom to call the boys together, and make a sort of report, after every half-yearly visit to the capital, regarding the relations and friends he had seen, the news he had heard, the letters he had brought down, the bills which had been paid, the accounts which had been left unpaid, and so forth. This solemn proceeding always took place in the afternoon of the day after his return; perhaps because the boys acquired strength of mind from the suspense of the morning, or possibly because Mr. Squeers himself acquired greater sternness and hardness from certain warm drinks in which he used to indulge after his early dinner. Be this as it may, the boys were recalled from house-window, garden, stable, and cow-yard, and the school were gathered in full assembly, when Mr. Squeers, with a small bundle of papers in his hand, and Mrs. S. following with a pair of canes, entered the room and proclaimed silence.

"Let any boy speak a word without leave," said Mr. Squeers mildly, "and I'll take the skin off his back."

This special announcement had the desired effect, and a death-like silence immediately prevailed, in the midst of which Mr. Squeers went on to say:

"Boys, I've been to London, and have returned to my family and you, as strong and well as ever."

According to half-yearly custom, the boys gave three feeble cheers at this refreshing intelligence. Such cheers! Sighs of extra strength with the chill on.

"I have seen the parents of some boys," continued Squeers, turning over his papers, "and they're so glad to hear how their sons are getting on, that there's no prospect at all of their going away, which of course is a very pleasant thing to reflect upon, for all parties."

Two or three hands went to two or three eyes when Squeers said this, but the greater part of the young gentlemen having no particular parents to speak of, were wholly uninterested in the thing one way or another.

"I have had disappointments to contend against," said Squeers, looking very grim; "Bolder's father was two pounds ten short. Where is Bolder?"

"Here he is, please, sir," replied twenty unnecessarily eager voices. Boys are very like men, to be sure.

"Come here, Bolder," said Squeers.

An unhealthy-looking boy, with warts all over his hands, stepped from his place to the master's desk, and raised his eyes imploringly to Squeer's face; his own, quite white from the rapid beating of his heart.

"Bolder," said Squeers, speaking very slowly, for he was considering, as the saying goes, where to have him, "Bolder, if your father thinks that because—why, what's this, sir?"

As Squeers spoke, he caught up the boy's hand by the sleeve of his jacket, and surveyed it with an appearance of horror and disgust.

"What do you call this, sir?" demanded the schoolmaster, administering a cut with the cane to speed the reply.

"I can't help it, indeed, sir," replied the boy, crying. "They will come; it's the dirty work, I think, sir—at least I don't know what it is, sir, but it's not my fault."

"Bolder," said Squeers, rolling up his sleeves, and moistening the palm of his right hand to get a good grip of the cane, "you are an incurable young scoundrel, and as the last thrashing did you no good, we must see what another will do towards beating it out of you."

With this, and wholly disregarding a pitiful cry for mercy, Mr. Squeers fell upon the boy and caned him soundly; not leaving off, indeed, until his arm was tired out.

"There," said Squeers, when he had quite done; "rub

away as hard as you like, you won't rub that off in a hurry. Oh! you won't hold that noise, won't you? Put him out, Smike."

The drudge knew better from long experience than to hesitate about obeying, so he bundled the victim out by a side door, and Mr. Squeers perched himself again on his own stool, supported by Mrs. Squeers, who occupied another at his side.

"Now let us see," said Squeers. "A letter for Cobbey. Stand up, Cobbey."

Another boy stood up, and eyed the letter very hard while Squeers made a summary of the same.

"Oh!" said Squeers: "Cobbey's grandmother is dead, and his uncle John has took to drinking, which is all the news his sister sends, except eighteenpence, which will just pay for that broken square of glass. Mrs. Squeers, my dear, will you take the money?"

The worthy lady pocketed the eighteenpence with a most business-like air, and Squeers passed on to the next boy, as coolly as possible.

"Graymarsh," said Squeers, "he's the next. Stand up, Graymarsh."

Another boy stood up, and the schoolmaster looked over the letter as before.

"Graymarsh's aunt," said Squeers, when he had possessed himself of the contents, "is very glad to hear he's so well and happy, and sends her respectful compliments to Mrs. Squeers, and thinks she must be an angel. She likewise thinks Mr. Squeers is too good for this world; but hopes he may long be spared to carry on the business. Would have sent the two pair of stockings, as desired, but is short of money, so forwards a tract¹ instead, and hopes Graymarsh will put his trust in Providence. Hopes, above all, that he will study in everything to please Mr. and Mrs.

¹ tract: a small booklet giving advice on religious matters.

Squeers, and look upon them as his only friends; and that he will love Master Squeers; and not object to sleeping five in a bed, which no Christian should. Ah!" said Squeers, folding it up, "a delightful letter. Very moving indeed."

It was moving in one sense, for Graymarsh's aunt was strongly supposed, by her more intimate friends, to be no other than his mother; Squeers, however, without referring to this part of the story (which would have sounded immoral before the boys), proceeded with the business by calling out "Mobbs," whereupon another boy arose, and Graymarsh resumed his seat.

"Mobb's step-mother," said Squeers, "took to her bed on hearing that he wouldn't eat fat, and has been very ill ever since. She wishes to know, by an early post, where he expects to go to, if he quarrels with his food; and with what feelings he could turn up his nose at the cow's liver soup, after his good master had asked a blessing on it. This was told her in the London newspapers—not by Mr. Squeers, for he is too kind and too good to set anybody against anybody—and it has vexed her so much, Mobbs can't think. She is sorry to find he is discontented, which is sinful and horrid, and hopes Mr. Squeers will flog him into a happier state of mind; with this view, she has also stopped his halfpenny a week pocket-money, and given a double-bladed knife with a corkscrew in it to the Missionaries, which she had bought on purpose for him."

"A sulky state of feeling," said Squeers, after a terrible pause, during which he had moistened the palm of his right hand again, "won't do. Cheerfulness and contentment must be kept up. Mobbs, come to me!"

Mobbs moved slowly towards the desk, rubbing his eyes in expectation of good cause for doing so; and he soon afterwards retired by the side door, with as good cause as a boy need have.

Mr. Squeers then proceeded to open a miscellaneous collection of letters; some enclosing money, which Mrs. Squeers "took care of" and others referring to small articles of apparel, as caps and so forth, all of which the same lady stated to be too large, or too small, and calculated for nobody but young Squeers, who would appear indeed to have had the most accommodating limbs, since everything that came into the school fitted him perfectly. His head, in particular, must have been singularly elastic, for hats and caps of all sizes were alike to him.

This business despatched, a few slovenly lessons were performed, and Squeers retired to his fireside, leaving Nicholas to take care of the boys in the schoolroom, which was very cold, and where a meal of bread and cheese was served out shortly after dark.

There was a small fire at that corner of the room which was nearest to the master's desk, and by it Nicholas sat down, so depressed and self-degraded by the consciousness of his position, that if death could have come upon him at that time, he would have been almost happy to meet it. The cruelty of which he had been an unwilling witness, the coarse and ruffianly behaviour of Squeers even in his best moods, the filthy place, the sights and sounds about him, all contributed to this state of feeling; but when he recollected that, being there as an assistant, he actually seemed—no matter what unhappy train of circumstances had brought him to that pass—to be helping and approving a system which filled him with honest disgust and indignation, he hated himself, and felt, for the moment, as though the mere consciousness of his present situation must, through all time to come, prevent his raising his head again.

But, for the present, his resolve was taken, and the resolution he had formed on the night before remained undisturbed. He had written to his mother and sister,

announcing the safe conclusion of his journey, and saying as little about Dotheboys Hall, and saying that little as cheerfully as he possibly could. He hoped that by remaining where he was, he might do some good, even there; at all events, others depended too much on his uncle's favour to admit of his awakening his wrath just then.

One reflection disturbed him far more than any selfish considerations arising out of his own position. This was the probable fate of his sister Kate. His uncle had deceived him, and might he not send her to some miserable place where her youth and beauty would prove a far greater curse than ugliness and old age? To a caged man, bound hand and foot, this was a terrible idea; but no, he thought, his mother was by; there was the portrait-painter, too—simple enough, but still living in the world, and of it. He was willing to believe that Ralph Nickleby had conceived a personal dislike to himself. Having pretty good reason, by this time, to return it, he had no great difficulty in arriving at this conclusion, and tried to persuade himself that the feeling extended no farther than between them.

As he was lost in these thoughts, he all at once encountered the upturned face of Smike, who was on his knees before the stove, picking a few stray cinders from the hearth and planting them on the fire. He had paused to steal a look at Nicholas, and when he saw that he was observed, shrunk back, as if expecting a blow.

"You need not fear me," said Nicholas kindly. "Are you cold?"

"N-n-o."

"You are shivering."

"I am not cold," replied Smike quickly. "I am used to it."

There was such an obvious fear of giving offence in his manner, and he was such a timid, broken-spirited creature, that Nicholas could not help exclaiming, "Poor fellow!"

If he had struck the drudge, he would have crept away without a word. But, now, he burst into tears.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" he cried, covering his face with his cracked and horny hands. "My heart will break. It will, it will."

"Hush!" said Nicholas, laying his hand upon his shoulder. "Be a man; you are nearly one by years, God help you."

"By years!" cried Smike. "Oh dear, dear, how many of them? How many of them since I was a little child, younger than any that are here now! Where are they all!"

"Whom do you speak of?" inquired Nicholas, wishing to rouse the poor half-witted creature to reason. "Tell me."

"My friends," he replied, "myself—my—oh! what sufferings mine have been!"

"There is always hope," said Nicholas; he knew not what to say.

"No," replied the other, "no; none for me. Do you remember the boy that died here?"

"I was not here, you know," said Nicholas gently; "but what of him?"

"Why," replied the youth, drawing closer to his questioner's side, "I was with him at night, and when it was all silent he cried no more for friends he wished to come and sit with him, but began to see faces round his bed that came from home; he said they smiled, and talked to him; and he died at last lifting his head to kiss them. Do you hear?"

"Yes, yes," rejoined Nicholas.

"What faces will smile on me when I die?" cried his companion, shivering. "Who will talk to me in those long nights? They cannot come from home; they would frighten me if they did, for I don't know what it is, and shouldn't know them. Pain and fear, pain and fear for me, alive or dead. No hope, no hope."

The bell rang to bed; and the boy, returning at the sound into his usual passive state, crept away at if anxious to avoid notice. It was with a heavy heart that Nicholas soon afterwards—no, not retired; there was no retirement there—followed—to his dirty and crowded dormitory.

CHAPTER IX

Of Miss Squeers, Mrs. Squeers, Master Squeers, and Mr. Squeers; and of various matters and persons connected no less with the Squeerses than with Nicholas Nickleby.

WHEN Mr. Squeers left the schoolroom for the night, he took himself, as has been before remarked, to his own fireside, which was situated—not in the room in which Nicholas had eaten on the night of his arrival, but in a smaller apartment in the rear of the house, where his lady wife, his delightful son, and accomplished daughter, were in the full enjoyment of each other's society; Mrs. Squeers being engaged in the domestic pursuit of stocking-mending; and the young lady and gentleman being occupied in the settlement of some youthful differences by means of a fight across the table, which, on the approach of their honoured parent, sank into a noiseless exchange of kicks beneath it.

And, in this place, it may be as well to inform the reader, that Miss Fanny Squeers was in her three-and-twentieth year. If there be any one grace or loveliness inseparable from that particular period of life, Miss Squeers may be supposed to have been possessed of it, as there is no reason to suppose that she was a solitary exception to a universal rule. She was not tall like her mother, but short like her

father; from the former she inherited a voice of harsh quality; from the latter a remarkable expression of the right eye, something like having none at all.

Miss Squeers had been spending a few days with a neighbouring friend, and had only just returned to the parental roof. To this circumstance may be referred her having heard nothing of Nicholas, until Mr. Squeers himself now made him the subject of conversation.

"Well, my dear," said Squeers, drawing up his chair, "what do you think of him by this time?"

"Think of who?" inquired Mrs. Squeers; who (as she often remarked) was no grammarian, thank Heaven.

"Of the young man—the new teacher—who else could I mean?"

"Oh! that Knuckleboy," said Mrs. Squeers impatiently. "I hate him."

"What do you hate him for, my dear?" asked Squeers.

"What's that to you?" retorted Mrs. Squeers. "If I hate him, that's enough, ain't it?"

"Quite enough, for him, my dear, and a great deal too much I dare say, if he knew it," replied Squeers in a peace-making tone. "I only asked from curiosity, my dear."

"Well then, if you want to know," replied Mrs. Squeers, "I'll tell you. Because he's a proud, conceited, high and mighty, turned-up-nosed peacock."

Mrs. Squeers, when excited, was accustomed to use strong language, and, moreover, to make use of a large number of words, some of which were of a figurative kind, as the word peacock, and furthermore the reference to Nicholas's nose, which was not intended to be taken in its literal sense, but rather to be understood according to the fancy of the hearers.

Neither were they meant to refer to each other, so much as to the object on whom they were bestowed, as will be seen in the present case: a peacock with a turned-up

nose being new among birds, and a thing not commonly seen.

"Hem!" said Squeers, as if in mild disagreement with this outbreak. "He is cheap, my dear; the young man is very cheap."

"Not a bit of it," retorted Mrs. Squeers.

"Five pound a year," said Squeers.

"What of that; it's dear if you don't want him, isn't it?" replied his wife.

"But we do want him," urged Squeers.

"I don't see that you want him any more than the dead," said Mrs. Squeers. "Don't tell me. You can put on the cards and in the advertisements 'Education by Mr. Wackford Squeers and able assistants,' without having any assistants, can't you? Isn't it done every day by all the masters about? I've no patience with you."

"Haven't you!" said Squeers sternly. "Now I'll tell you what, Mrs. Squeers. In this matter of having a teacher, I'll take my own way, if you please. A slave driver in the West Indies is allowed a man under him, to see that his blacks don't run away, or get up a rebellion; and I'll have a man under me to do the same with our blacks, till such time as little Wackford is able to take charge of the school."

"Am I to take charge of the school when I grow up a man, father?" said Wackford junior, suspending in the greatness of his delight, a savage kick which he was administering to his sister.

"You are, my son," replied Mr. Squeers, in an affectionate voice.

"Oh, my eye, won't I give it to the boys!" exclaimed the interesting child, grasping his father's cane. "Oh, father, won't I make 'em squeak again!"

It was a proud moment in Mr. Squeers's life, when he witnessed that burst of enthusiasm in his young child's mind, and saw in it a foreshadowing of his future greatness.

He pressed a penny into his hand, and gave expression to his feelings (as did his excellent wife also) in a shout of approving laughter. The infantile appeal to their common sympathies at once restored cheerfulness to the conversation, and harmony to the company.

"He's a nasty stuck-up monkey, that's what I consider him," said Mrs. Squeers, returning to Nicholas.

"Supposing he is," said Squeers, "he is as well stuck up in our schoolroom as anywhere else, isn't he?—especially as he don't like it."

"Well," observed Mrs. Squeers, "there's something in that. I hope it'll bring his pride down, and it shall be no fault of mine if it don't."

Now, a proud assistant in a Yorkshire school was such a very extraordinary and unaccountable thing to hear of—any assistant at all being a novelty; but a proud one, a being of whose existence the wildest imagination could never have dreamed—that Miss Squeers, who seldom troubled herself with school matters, inquired with much curiosity who this Knuckleboy was, that gave himself such airs.

"Nickleby," said Squeers, spelling the name according to some strange system which prevailed in his own mind; "your mother always calls things and people by their wrong names."

"No matter for that," said Mrs. Squeers, "I see them with right eyes, and that's quite enough for me. I watched him when you were laying on to little Bolder this afternoon. He looked as black as thunder, all the while, and one time started up as if he had more than got it in his mind to make a rush at you. I saw him, though he thought I didn't."

"Never mind that, father," said Miss Squeers, as the head of the family was about to reply. "Who is the man?"

"Why, your father has got some nonsense in his head

that he's the son of a poor gentleman that died the other day," said Mrs. Squeers.

"The son of a gentleman?"

"Yes; but I don't believe a word of it. If he's a gentleman's son at all, he's a foundling, that's my opinion."

"He's nothing of the kind," said Squeers, in answer to the above remark, "for his father was married to his mother, years before he was born, and she is alive now. If he was, it would be no business of ours, for we make a very good friend by having him here; and if he likes to teach the boys anything besides minding them, I have no objection, I am sure."

"I say again, I hate him worse than poison," said Mrs. Squeers, vigorously.

"If you dislike him, my dear," returned Squeers, "I don't know anybody who can show dislike better than you, and of course there's no need, with him, to take the trouble to hide it."

"I don't intend to, I assure you," interposed Mrs. S.

"That's right," said Squeers; "and if he has a touch of pride about him, as I think he has, I don't believe there's a woman in all England that can bring anybody's spirit down, as quick as you can, my love."

Mrs. Squeers laughed on the receipt of these flattering compliments, and said, she hoped she had tamed a high spirit or two in her day. It is but due to her character to say, that with the help of her excellent husband, she had broken many and many a one.

Miss Fanny Squeers carefully treasured up this, and much more conversation on the same subject, until she retired for the night, when she questioned the hungry servant, in great detail, regarding the outward appearance and behaviour of Nicholas; to which questions the girl returned such enthusiastic replies, joined with so many flattering remarks touching his beautiful dark eyes, and his

sweet smile, and his straight legs—upon which last-named articles she laid particular stress; the general run of legs at Dotheboys Hall being crooked—that Miss Squeers was not long in arriving at the conclusion that the new assistant must be a very remarkable person, or, as she herself significantly phrased it, “something quite out of the common.” And so Miss Squeers made up her mind that she would take a personal observation of Nicholas the very next day.

In pursuit of this design, the young lady watched the opportunity of her mother being engaged, and her father absent, and went accidentally into the schoolroom to get a pen mended; where, seeing nobody but Nicholas presiding over the boys, she blushed very deeply, and exhibited great confusion.

“I beg your pardon,” said Miss Squeers, pretending to hesitate; “I thought my father was—or might be—dear me, how very awkward!”

“Mr. Squeers is out,” said Nicholas, by no means overcome by the sight, unexpected though it was.

“Do you know how long he will be, sir?” asked Miss Squeers, with modest hesitation.

“He said about an hour,” replied Nicholas—politely of course, but without any sign of being stricken to the heart by Miss Squeers’s charms.

“I never knew anything happen so cross,” exclaimed the young lady. “Thank you! I am very sorry I came in, I am sure. If I hadn’t thought my father was here, I wouldn’t upon any account have—it is very annoying—must look so very strange,” murmured Miss Squeers, blushing once more, and glancing, from the pen in her hand, to Nicholas at his desk, and back again.

“If that is all you want,” said Nicholas, pointing to the pen, and smiling, in spite of himself, at the affected embarrassment of the schoolmaster’s daughter, “perhaps I can supply his place.”

Miss Squeers glanced at the door, as if doubtful if it would be modest to advance any nearer to an utter stranger; then round the schoolroom, as though in some measure reassured by the presence of forty boys; and finally sidled up to Nicholas and delivered the pen into his hand, with a most winning mixture of reserve and condescension.

"Shall it be a hard or a soft nib?" inquired Nicholas, smiling to prevent himself from laughing outright.

"He has a beautiful smile," thought Miss Squeers.

"Which did you say?" asked Nicholas.

"Dear me, I was thinking of something else for the moment, I declare," replied Miss Squeers. "Oh! as soft as possible, if you please." With which words, Miss Squeers sighed. It might be, to give Nicholas to understand that her heart was soft, and that the pen was wanted to match.

Upon these instructions Nicholas made the pen; when he gave it to Miss Squeers, Miss Squeers dropped it; and when he stooped to pick it up, Miss Squeers stooped also, and they knocked their heads together; whereat five-and-twenty little boys laughed aloud: being positively for the first and only time that half-year.

"Very awkward of me," said Nicholas, opening the door for the young lady's retreat.

"Not at all, sir," replied Miss Squeers; "it was my fault. It was all my foolish—a—a—good morning!"

"Good-bye," said Nicholas. "The next I make for you, I hope will be made less clumsily. Take care! You are biting the nib off now."

"Really," said Miss Squeers; "so embarrassing that I scarcely know what I—very sorry to give you so much trouble."

"Not the least trouble in the world," replied Nicholas, closing the schoolroom door.

"I never saw such legs in the whole course of my life," said Miss Squeers, as she walked away.

In fact, Miss Squeers was in love with Nicholas Nickleby.

To account for the rapidity with which this young lady had conceived a passion for Nicholas, it may be necessary to state, that the friend from whom she had so recently returned, was a miller's daughter of only eighteen, who had got engaged to the son of a small corn merchant, resident in the nearest market town. Miss Squeers and the miller's daughter, being fast friends, had agreed some two years before, according to a custom common among young ladies, that whoever was first engaged to be married, should straightway confide the mighty secret to the other, before communicating it to any living soul and engage her as a bridesmaid¹ without loss of time; in fulfilment of which promise the miller's daughter, when her engagement was formed, came out specially, at eleven o'clock at night as the corn-merchant's son made an offer of his hand and heart at twenty-five minutes past ten by the Dutch clock in the kitchen, and rushed into Miss Squeers's bedroom with the happy intelligence. Now, Miss Squeers being five years older, and out of her teens (which is also a great matter), had, since, been more than commonly anxious to return the compliment, and tell her friend a similar secret; but, either in consequence of finding it hard to please herself, or harder still to please anybody else, had never had an opportunity so to do, as she had no such secret to disclose. The little interview with Nicholas had no sooner passed, as above described, however, than Miss Squeers, putting on her bonnet, made her way, with great haste, to her friend's house, and, upon a solemn renewal of various old promises of secrecy, revealed how that she was not exactly engaged, but going to be—to a gentleman's son—(none of your corn-merchants, but a gentleman's son of high descent)—who

¹ bridesmaid: a woman on her wedding day and for some time afterwards is known as the bride. At the wedding ceremony in church she is attended by one or more of her friends, usually unmarried girls, known as bridesmaids.

had come down as a teacher to Dotheboys Hall, under the most mysterious and remarkable circumstances—indeed, as Miss Squeers more than once hinted, she had good reason to believe, brought by the fame of her many charms, to seek her out and woo and win her.

“Isn’t it an extraordinary thing?” said Miss Squeers, emphasizing the adjective strongly.

“Most extraordinary,” replied the friend. “But what has he said to you?”

“Don’t ask me what he said, my dear,” replied Miss Squeers. “If you had only seen his looks and smiles! I never was so overcome in all my life.”

“Did he look in this way?” inquired the miller’s daughter, imitating as nearly as she could, a favourite grin of the corn-merchant.

“Very like that—only more gentlemanly,” replied Miss Squeers.

“Ah!” said the friend, “then he means something, depend on it.”

Miss Squeers, having slight doubts on the subject, was by no means ill-pleased to be confirmed by a good authority; and, discovering, on further conversation and comparison of notes, a great many points of resemblance between the behaviour of Nicholas and that of the corn-merchant, grew so exceedingly confidential, that she entrusted her friend with a vast number of things Nicholas had not said, which were all so very flattering as to be quite decisive.

“How I should like to see him!” exclaimed the friend.

“So you shall, Tilda,” replied Miss Squeers. “I should consider myself one of the most ungrateful creatures alive, if I denied you. I think mother’s going away for two days to fetch some boys; and when she does, I’ll ask you and John up to tea, and have him to meet you.”

This was a charming idea, and having fully discussed it, the friends parted.

It so fell out, that Mrs. Squeers's journey, to some distance, to fetch three new boys, and worry the relations of two old ones for the balance of a small account, was fixed, that very afternoon, for the next day but one; and on the next day but one, Mrs. Squeers got up outside the coach, as it stopped to change at Greta Bridge, taking with her a small bundle containing something in a bottle, and some sandwiches, and carrying besides a large white topcoat to wear in the night-time; with which luggage she went her way.

Whenever such opportunities as these occurred, it was Squeers's custom to drive over to the market town, every evening, on pretence of urgent business, and stop till ten or eleven o'clock at an inn he was very fond of. As the party was not in his way, therefore, but rather offered a means of compromise with Miss Squeers, he readily gave his full consent, and willingly communicated to Nicholas that he was expected to take his tea in the parlour that evening, at five o'clock.

To be sure Miss Squeers was in a desperately nervous state as the time approached, and to be sure she was dressed out to the best advantage: with her hair—it had more than a trace of red, and she wore it short—curled in five distinct rows, up to the very top of her head, and arranged cleverly over the doubtful eye; to say nothing of the blue sash which floated down her back, or the worked apron, or the long gloves, or the green gauze scarf, worn over one shoulder and under the other; or any of the numerous ornaments which were to be as so many arrows to the heart of Nicholas. She had scarcely completed these arrangements to her entire satisfaction, when the friend arrived with a whitey-brown parcel—flat and three-cornered—containing various small adornments which were to be put on upstairs, and which the friend put on, talking without ceasing. When Miss Squeers had “done” the friend's hair, the friend “did” Miss Squeers's hair, throwing in some striking improve-

ments in the way of curls down the neck; and then, when they were both touched up to their entire satisfaction, they went downstairs in full state with the long gloves on, all ready for company.

"Where's John, 'Tilda?" said Miss Squeers.

"Only gone home to clean himself," replied the friend.

"He will be here by the time the tea's made."

"My heart is beating so," observed Miss Squeers.

"Ah! I know what it is," replied the friend.

"I have not been used to it, you know, 'Tilda," said Miss Squeers, applying her hand to the left side of her sash.

"You'll soon get the better of it, dear," replied the friend. While they were talking thus, the hungry servant brought in the tea-things, and, soon afterwards, somebody tapped at the room door.

"There he is!" cried Miss Squeers. "Oh, 'Tilda!"

"Hush!" said 'Tilda. "Hem! Say, come in."

"Come in," cried Miss Squeers, faintly. And in walked Nicholas.

"Good evening," said that young gentleman, all unconscious of his conquest. "I understood from Mr. Squeers that——"

"Oh, yes; it's all right," interrupted Miss Squeers. "Father don't tea with us, but you won't mind that, I dare say." (This was said with a meaning smile.)

Nicholas opened his eyes at this, but he turned the matter off very coolly—not caring, particularly, about anything just then—and went through the ceremony of introduction to the miller's daughter, with so much grace, that that young lady was lost in admiration.

"We are only waiting for one more gentleman," said Miss Squeers, taking off the teapot lid, and looking in to see how the tea was getting on.

It was a matter of equal moment to Nicholas whether they were waiting for one gentleman or twenty, so he

received the intelligence with perfect unconcern; and, being out of spirits, and not seeing any special reason why he should make himself agreeable, looked out of the window and sighed without meaning to.

As luck would have it, Miss Squeers's friend was of a playful turn, and hearing Nicholas sigh, she took it into her head to laugh at the lovers about their lowness of spirits.

"But if it's caused by my being here," said the young lady, "don't mind me a bit, for I'm quite as bad. You may go on just as you would if you were alone."

"Tilda," said Miss Squeers, colouring up to the top row of her curls, "I am ashamed of you"; and here the two friends burst into a variety of giggles, and glanced, from time to time, over the tops of their pocket-handkerchiefs, at Nicholas, who from a state of unmixed astonishment, gradually fell into one of irrepressible laughter—occasioned, partly by the bare notion of his being in love with Miss Squeers, and partly by the absurd appearance and behaviour of the two girls. These two causes of merriment, taken together, struck him as being so keenly ridiculous, that, despite his miserable condition, he laughed till he was thoroughly exhausted.

"Well," thought Nicholas, "as I am here, and seem expected, for some reason or other, to be amiable, it's of no use looking like a goose. I may as well accommodate myself to the company."

We blush to tell it; but his youthful spirits and liveliness getting, for a time, the better of his sad thoughts, he no sooner formed this resolution than he saluted Miss Squeers and the friend, with great gallantry, and drawing a chair to the tea-table, began to make himself more at home than in all probability an assistant has ever done in his employer's house since assistants were first invented.

The ladies were in the full delight of this altered be-

haviour on the part of Mr. Nickleby, when the expected gentleman arrived, with his hair very damp from recent washing, and a clean shirt, the collar of which might have belonged to some giant ancestor, forming, together with a white waistcoat of similar size, the chief ornament of his person.

"Well, John," said Miss Matilda Price (which, by the bye, was the name of the miller's daughter).

"Well," said John with a grin that even the collar could not conceal.

"I beg your pardon," said Miss Squeers, hastening to do the honours. "Mr. Nickleby—Mr. John Browdie."

"Servant, sir," said John, who was something over six feet high, with a face and body rather above the due proportion than below it.

"Yours to command, sir," replied Nicholas, making fearful attacks on the bread and butter.

Mr. Browdie was not a gentleman of great conversational powers, so he grinned twice more, and having now bestowed his customary mark of recognition on every person in the company, grinned at nothing in particular, and helped himself to food.

"The old woman's away, isn't she?" said Mr. Browdie, with his mouth full.

Miss Squeers nodded assent.

Mr. Browdie gave a grin of special width, as if he thought that really was something to laugh at, and went to work at the bread and butter with increased vigour. It was quite a sight to behold how he and Nicholas emptied the plate between them.

"You won't get bread and butter every night, I expect, man," said Mr. Browdie, after he had sat staring at Nicholas a long time over the empty plate.

Nicholas bit his lip, and coloured, but pretended not to hear the remark.



*"Your remarks are ill-mannered," said Nicholas,
in a raging passion*

"Huh!" said Mr. Browdie, laughing loudly, "they don't put too much into them. You'll be nothing but skin and bones if you stop here long. Ho! ho! ho!"

"You are amusing, sir," said Nicholas scornfully.

"No; I don't know," replied Mr. Browdie, "but the other teacher, he was a lean one, he was." The recollection of the

last teacher's leanness seemed to afford Mr. Browdie the most exquisite delight, for he laughed until he found it necessary to apply his coat sleeves to his eyes.

"I don't know whether your understanding is quite keen enough, Mr. Browdie, to enable you to understand that your remarks are ill-mannered," said Nicholas, in a raging passion, "but if it is, have the goodness to——"

"If you say another word, John," shrieked Miss Price, stopping her admirer's mouth as he was about to interrupt, "only half a word, I'll never forgive you, or speak to you again."

"Well, my girl, I don't care about him," said the corn-merchant, giving a hearty kiss to Miss Matilda, "let him go on, let him go on."

It now became Miss Squeers's turn to plead with Nicholas, which she did with many symptoms of alarm and horror; the effect of the double interruption was, that he and John Browdie shook hands across the table with much seriousness; and such was the dignified nature of the ceremony, that Miss Squeers was overcome and shed tears.

"What's the matter, Fanny?" said Miss Price.

"Nothing, 'Tilda," replied Miss Squeers, sobbing.

"There never was any danger," said Miss Price, "was there, Mr. Nickleby?"

"None at all," replied Nicholas. "Absurd."

"That's right," whispered Miss Price, "say something kind to her, and she'll soon come round. Here! Shall John and I go into the little kitchen, and come back presently?"

"Not on any account," answered Nicholas, quite alarmed at the proposal. "What on earth should you do that for?"

"Well," said Miss Price, taking him inside, and speaking with some degree of contempt—"you *are* a one to keep company."

"What do you mean?" said Nicholas; "I am not a one

to keep company at all—here at all events. I can't make this out."

"No, nor I neither," replied Miss Price; "but men are always faithless, and always were, and always will be; that I can make out, very easily."

"Faithless!" cried Nicholas; "what do you suppose? You don't mean to say you think——"

"Oh, no; I think nothing at all," retorted Miss Price snappishly. "Look at her, dressed so beautiful and looking so well—really *almost* handsome. I am ashamed of you."

"My dear girl, what have I got to do with her dressing beautifully or looking well?" inquired Nicholas.

"Come, don't call me a dear girl," said Miss Price—smiling a little though, for she was pretty, and a flirt too in her small way, and Nicholas was good-looking, and she supposed him the property of somebody else, which were all reasons why she should be glad to think she had made an impression on him—"or Fanny will be saying it's my fault. Come; we're going to have a game of cards." Pronouncing these last words aloud, she moved away and joined the big Yorkshireman.

This was wholly unintelligible to Nicholas, who had no other distinct impression on his mind at the moment, than that Miss Squeers was an ordinary-looking girl, and her friend Miss Price a pretty one; but he had not time to enlighten himself by reflection, for the fire being by this time made up and the candle lowered, they sat down to play cards.

"There are only four of us, 'Tilda," said Miss Squeers, looking slyly at Nicholas; "so we had better go partners, two against two."

"What do you say, Mr. Nickleby?" inquired Miss Price.

"With all the pleasure in life," replied Nicholas. And so saying, quite unconscious of his terrible offence, he put into one common heap those portions of a Dotheboys Hall

card of terms, which represented his own counters, and those allotted to Miss Price, respectively.

"Mr. Browdie," said Miss Squeers, furiously, "shall we join against them?"

The Yorkshireman agreed—apparently quite overcome by the new assistant's impudence—and Miss Squeers darted a spiteful look at her friend, and giggled savagely.

The deal fell to Nicholas, and the hand was lucky.

"We intend to win everything," said he.

"*Tilda has won something she didn't expect, I think, haven't you, dear?*" said Miss Squeers, spitefully.

"Only a dozen and eight, love," replied Miss Price, pretending to take the question as referring to the game.

"How dull you are to-night!" sneered Miss Squeers.

"No, indeed," replied Miss Price, "I am in excellent spirits. I was thinking *you* seemed out of sorts."

"Me!" cried Miss Squeers, biting her lips, and trembling with very jealousy. "Oh, no!"

"That's well," remarked Miss Price. "Your hair is coming out of curl, dear."

"Never mind me," giggled Miss Squeers; "you had better attend to your partner."

"Thank you for reminding her," said Nicholas. "So she had."

The Yorkshireman flattened his nose, once or twice, with his closed fist, as if to keep his hand in, till he had an opportunity of exercising it upon the features of some other gentleman; and Miss Squeers tossed her head with such indignation that the gust of wind raised by the multitudinous curls in motion, nearly blew the candle out.

"I never had such luck, really," exclaimed flirtatious Miss Price, after another hand or two. "It's all because of you, Mr. Nickleby, I think. I should like to have you for a partner always."

"I wish you had."

"You'll have a bad wife, though, if you always win at cards," said Miss Price.

"Not if your wish is fulfilled," replied Nicholas. "I am sure I shall have a good one in that case."

To see how Miss Squeers tossed her head, and the corn-merchant flattened his nose, while this conversation was carrying on! It would have been worth a lot of money to have beheld that; let alone Miss Price's evident joy at making them jealous, and Nicholas Nickleby's happy unconsciousness of making anybody uncomfortable.

"We have all the talking to ourselves, it seems," said Nicholas, looking good-humouredly round the table as he took up the cards for a fresh deal.

"You do it so well," giggled Miss Squeers, "that it would be a pity to interrupt, wouldn't it, Mr. Browdie? He! he! he!"

"Nay," said Nicholas, "we do it for lack of anybody else to talk to."

"We'll talk to you, you know, if you'll say anything," said Miss Price.

"Thank you, 'Tilda, dear," retorted Miss Squeers, majestically.

"Or you can talk to each other, if you don't choose to talk to us," said Miss Price, teasing her dear friend. "John, why don't you say something?"

"Say something?" repeated the Yorkshireman.

"Ay, and not sit there so silent and miserable."

"Well, then!" said the Yorkshireman, striking the table heavily with his fist, "what I say's this—Dang my bones and body, if I stand this any longer. Do you go home with me, and do that light and tight young gentleman look sharp out for a broken head, next time he comes under my hand."

"Mercy on us, what's all this?" cried Miss Price, in pretended astonishment.

"Come home, I tell you, come home," replied the Yorkshireman, sternly. And as he delivered the reply, Miss Squeers burst into a shower of tears; arising in part from desperate vexation, and in part from an impossible desire to tear somebody's face with her fair finger-nails.

This state of things had been brought about by various means and workings. Miss Squeers had brought it about, by pretending to the high state and condition of being engaged to be married without grounds for so doing; Miss Price had brought it about, by indulging in three motives of action; first, a desire to punish her friend for laying a claim to a rivalry in dignity, having no good title; secondly the pleasing of her own vanity, in receiving the compliments of a smart young man; and thirdly, a wish to convince the corn-merchant of the great danger he ran, in delaying the wedding; while Nicholas had brought it about, by half an hour's gaiety and thoughtlessness, and a very sincere desire to avoid the appearance of inclining at all towards Miss Squeers. So the means employed, and the end produced, were alike the most natural in the world; for young ladies will look forward to being married, and will push each other in the race to the altar, and will avail themselves of all opportunities of displaying their own attractions to the best advantage, down to the very end of time, as they have done from its beginning.

"Why, and here's Fanny in tears now!" exclaimed Miss Price as if in fresh amazement. "What can be the matter?"

"Oh! you don't know, miss, of course you don't know. Pray don't trouble yourself to inquire," said Miss Squeers, producing that change of countenance which children call, making a face.

"Well, I'm sure!" exclaimed Miss Price.

"And who cares whether you are sure or not, ma'am?" retorted Miss Squeers, making another face.

"You are monstrous polite, ma'am," said Miss Price.

"I shall not come to you to take lessons in the art, ma'am!" retorted Miss Squeers.

"You needn't take the trouble to make yourself plainer than you are, ma'am, however," answered Miss Price, "because that's quite unnecessary."

Miss Squeers, in reply, turned very red, and thanked God that she hadn't got the bold faces of some people. Miss Price, in answer, congratulated herself upon not being possessed of the envious feelings of other people; whereupon Miss Squeers made some general remark touching the danger of associating with low persons; to which Miss Price entirely agreed: observing that it was very true indeed, and she had thought so for a long time.

"Tilda," exclaimed Miss Squeers with dignity, "I hate you."

"Ah! there's no love lost between us, I assure you," said Miss Price, tying her bonnet strings with a jerk. "You'll cry your eyes out, when I'm gone; you know you will."

"I scorn your words, Minx," said Miss Squeers.

"You pay me a great compliment when you say so," answered the miller's daughter, curtsying very low. "Wish you a very good night, ma'am, and pleasant dreams attend your sleep!"

With this parting blessing, Miss Price swept from the room, followed by the huge Yorkshireman, who exchanged with Nicholas, at parting, a peculiarly expressive scowl.

They were no sooner gone, than Miss Squeers fulfilled the prophecy of her former friend by giving way to a great burst of tears, and uttering various dismal cries and broken words. Nicholas stood looking on for a few seconds, rather doubtful what to do, but feeling uncertain whether the fit would end in his being embraced, or scratched, and considering that either would be equally agreeable, he walked

off very quietly while Miss Squeers was moaning in her pocket-handkerchief.

"This is one consequence," thought Nicholas, when he had felt his way to the dark sleeping-room, "of my cursed readiness to adapt myself to any society in which chance carries me. If I had sat silent and motionless, as I might have done, this would not have happened."

He listened for a few minutes, but all was quiet.

"I was glad," he murmured, "to grasp at any relief from the sight of this dreadful place, or the presence of its vile master. I have set these people by the ears, and made two new enemies, where, heaven knows, I needed none. Well, it is a just punishment for having forgotten, even for an hour, what is around me now!"

So saying, he felt his way among the throng of weary-hearted sleepers, and crept into his poor bed.

CHAPTER X

Whereby the reader will be enabled to trace the further course of Miss Fanny Squeers's love, and to ascertain whether it ran smooth or otherwise.

IT was a fortunate circumstance for Miss Fanny Squeers that when her worthy papa returned home on the night of the small tea-party, he was what drinkers call "too far gone" to observe the numerous signs of extreme vexation of spirit which were plainly visible in her looks. Being, however, of a rather violent and quarrelsome mood in his cups, it is not impossible that he might have fallen out with her, either on this or some imaginary topic, if the young lady had not, with a foresight and prudence highly praise-

worthy, kept a boy up, on purpose, to bear the first effects of the good gentleman's anger; which, having showed itself in a variety of kicks and cuffs, went off sufficiently to allow of his being persuaded to go to bed. Which he did with his boots on, and an umbrella under his arm.

The hungry servant attended Miss Squeers in her own room according to custom, to curl her hair, perform the other little offices of her toilet, and administer as much flattery as she could get up, for the purpose; for Miss Squeers was quite lazy enough (and sufficiently vain and foolish too) to have been a fine lady; and it was only the unreasonable distinctions of rank and station which had prevented her from being one.

"How lovely your hair do curl to-night, miss," said the servant. "I declare if it isn't a pity and a shame to brush it out!"

"Hold your tongue!" replied Miss Squeers wrathfully.

Some considerable experience prevented the girl from being at all surprised at any outbreak of ill-temper on the part of Miss Squeers. Having a half perception of what had occurred in the course of the evening, she changed her way of making herself agreeable.

"Well, I couldn't help saying, miss, if you was to kill me for it," said the attendant, "that I never see nobody look so vulgar as Miss Price this night."

Miss Squeers sighed, and was prepared to listen.

"I know it's very wrong in me to say so, miss," continued the girl, delighted to see the impression she was making, "Miss Price being a friend of yours and all; but she does dress herself out so, and go on in such a manner to get noticed, that—oh—well, if people only saw themselves!"

"What do you mean, Phib?" asked Miss Squeers, looking in her own little glass, where, like most of us, she saw—not herself, but the reflection of some pleasant image in her own brain. "How you talk!"

"Talk, miss! It's enough to make a tom-cat talk French grammar, only to see how she tosses her head," replied the maid.

"She does toss her head," observed Miss Squeers, with a thoughtful air.

"So vain, and so very—very plain," said the girl.

"Poor 'Tilda!" sighed Miss Squeers, pityingly.

"And always laying herself out so, to get to be admired," pursued the servant. "Oh, dear! It's positively unlady-like."

"I can't allow you to talk in that way, Phib!" said Miss Squeers. "'Tilda's friends are low people, and if she doesn't know any better, it's their fault, and not hers."

"Well, but you know, miss," said Phoebe, for which name "Phib" was used as a condescending abbreviation, "if she was only to take copy by a friend—oh, if she only knew how wrong she was, and would but set herself right by you, what a nice young woman she might be in time!"

"Phib," rejoined Miss Squeers, with a stately air, "it's not proper for me to hear these comparisons drawn; they make 'Tilda look a coarse, improper sort of a person, and it seems unfriendly in me to listen to them. I would rather you dropped the subject, Phib; at the same time, I must say, that if 'Tilda Price would take pattern by somebody—not me particularly——"

"Oh, yes; you, miss," put in Phib.

"Well, me, Phib, if you will have it so," said Miss Squeers. "I must say, that if she would, she would be all the better for it."

"So somebody else thinks, or I am much mistaken," said the girl mysteriously.

"What do you mean?" demanded Miss Squeers.

"Never mind, miss," replied the girl; "I know what I know; that's all."

"Phib," said Miss Squeers dramatically, "I insist upon

your explaining yourself. What is this dark mystery? Speak."

"Why, if you will have it, miss, it's this," said the servant girl. "Mr. John Browdie thinks as you think, and if he wasn't too far gone to do it respectably, he'd be very glad to be off with Miss Price, and on with Miss Squeers."

"Gracious heavens!" exclaimed Miss Squeers, clasping her hands with great dignity. "What is this?"

"Truth, ma'am, and nothing but truth," replied the artful Phib.

"What a situation!" cried Miss Squeers; "on the point of unconsciously destroying the peace and happiness of my own 'Tilda. What is the reason that men fall in love with me, whether I like it or not, and desert their chosen ones for my sake?"

"Because they can't help it, miss," replied the girl; "the reason's plain." (If Miss Squeers were the reason, it was very plain.)

"Never let me hear of it again," retorted Miss Squeers. "Never! Do you hear? 'Tilda Price has faults—many faults—but I wish her well, and above all I wish her married; for I think it highly desirable—most desirable from the very nature of her failings—that she should be married as soon as possible. No, Phib. Let her have Mr. Browdie. I may pity him, poor fellow; but I have a great regard for 'Tilda, and only hope she may make a better wife than I think she will."

With this expression of feeling, Miss Squeers went to bed. Spite is a little word; but it represents as strange a muddle of feelings, and compound of discords, as any long word in the language. Miss Squeers knew as well in her heart of hearts, that what the miserable serving girl had said was sheer, coarse, lying flattery, as did the girl herself; yet the mere opportunity of showing a little ill-nature against the offending Miss Price, and pretending to pity her weaknesses

and tricks, though only in the presence of a solitary servant, was almost as great a relief to her anger as if the whole had been perfect truth. Nay, more. We have such extraordinary powers of persuasion when they are used upon ourselves, that Miss Squeers felt quite high-minded and great after her noble giving up of John Browdie's hand, and looked down upon her rival with a kind of holy calmness and tranquillity, that had a mighty effect in soothing her wounded feelings.

This happy state of mind had some influence in bringing about peace again; for, when a knock came at the front door the next day, and the miller's daughter was announced, Miss Squeers went to the parlour in a Christian frame of spirit, perfectly beautiful to behold.

"Well, Fanny," said the miller's daughter, "you see I have come to see you, although we had some words last night."

"I pity your bad passions, 'Tilda," replied Miss Squeers; "but I bear no ill-will. I am above it."

"Don't be cross, Fanny," said Miss Price. "I have come to tell you something that I know will please you."

"What may that be, 'Tilda?" demanded Miss Squeers, screwing up her lips, and looking as if nothing on earth, air, fire, or water, could afford her the slightest gleam of satisfaction.

"This," replied Miss Price. "After we left here last night, John and I had a dreadful quarrel."

"That doesn't please me," said Miss Squeers—relaxing into a smile though.

"Lor! I wouldn't think so bad of you as to suppose it did," said her companion. "That's not it."

"Oh!" said Miss Squeers, looking sad again. "Go on."

"After a great deal of quarrelling, and saying we would never see each other any more," continued Miss Price, "we made it up, and this morning John went and wrote our

names down to be put up, for the first time, next Sunday, so we shall be married in three weeks, and I give you notice to get your frock made."

There was mixed bitterness and sweetness in this intelligence. The prospect of the friend's being married so soon, was the bitterness, and the certainty of her not entertaining serious designs upon Nicholas was the sweetness. Upon the whole, the sweet was much greater than the bitter, so Miss Squeers said she would get the frock made, and that she hoped 'Tilda might be happy, though at the same time she didn't know, and would not have her build too much upon it, for men were strange creatures, and a great many married women were very miserable, and wished themselves single again with all their hearts; to which suggestions Miss Squeers added others equally likely to raise her friend's spirits and promote her cheerfulness of mind.

"But come now, Fanny," said Miss Price, "I want to have a word or two with you about young Mr. Nickleby."

"He is nothing to me," interrupted Miss Squeers, looking as if she might lose control of herself at any moment. "I despise him too much!"

"Oh, you don't mean that, I am sure!" replied her friend. "Confess, Fanny; don't you like him now?"

Without returning any direct reply, Miss Squeers, all at once, fell into a fit of spiteful tears, and exclaimed that she was a wretched, neglected, miserable outcast.

"I hate everybody," said Miss Squeers, "and I wish that everybody was dead—that I do."

"Dear, dear," said Miss Price, quite moved by this hatred of everybody. "You are not serious, I am sure."

"Yes, I am," answered Miss Squeers, tying tight knots in her pocket handkerchief, and shutting her teeth. "And I wish I was dead too. There!"

"Oh! you'll think very differently in another five minutes," said Matilda. "How much better to take him

into favour again, than to hurt yourself by going on in that way. Wouldn't it be much nicer, now, to have him all to yourself on good terms, in a company-keeping, love-making, pleasant sort of manner?"

"I don't know but what it would," sobbed Miss Squeers. "Oh! 'Tilda, how could you have acted so mean and dishonourable! I wouldn't have believed it of you, if anybody had told me."

"Heyday!" exclaimed Miss Price, giggling. "One would suppose I had been murdering somebody at least."

"Very nearly as bad," said Miss Squeers passionately.

"And all this, because I happen to have enough of good looks to make people civil to me," cried Miss Price. "Persons don't make their own faces, and it's no more my fault if mine is a good one than it is other people's fault if theirs is a bad one."

"Hold your tongue," shrieked Miss Squeers, in her shrillest tone: "or you'll make me slap you, 'Tilda, and afterwards I should be sorry for it!"

The quarrel, from slight beginnings, rose to a considerable height, and was assuming a very violent form, when both parties, falling into a great passion of tears, exclaimed simultaneously, that they had never thought of being spoken to in that way; which exclamation, leading to a complaint, gradually brought on an explanation: and the result was, that they fell into each other's arms, and swore eternal friendship: the occasion in question, making the fifty-second time of repeating the same impressive ceremony within a twelvemonth.

Perfect friendship being thus restored, a dialogue naturally followed upon the number and nature of the garments which would be indispensable for Miss Price's entrance into the holy state of marriage, when Miss Squeers clearly showed that a great many more than the miller could, or would afford, were absolutely necessary, and could not

decently be done without. The young lady then, by an easy digression, led the talk to her own clothes, and after recounting their principal beauties at some length, took her friend upstairs to make an inspection of them. The treasures of two drawers and a cupboard having been displayed, and all the smaller articles tried on, it was time for Miss Price to return home; and as she had been delighted with all the frocks, and had been struck quite dumb with admiration of a new pink scarf, Miss Squeers said in high good humour that she would walk part of the way with her, for the pleasure of her company; and off they went together; Miss Squeers making much, as they walked along, of her father's accomplishments; and multiplying his income by ten, to give her friend some faint notion of the vast importance and superiority of her family.

It happened that that particular time, being the short daily interval which was allowed between what was pleasantly called the dinner of Mr. Squeers's pupils and their return to the pursuit of useful knowledge, was precisely the hour when Nicholas was accustomed to go out for a melancholy walk, and to consider, as he wandered dully through the village, his miserable lot. Miss Squeers knew this perfectly well, but had perhaps forgotten it, for when she caught sight of that young gentleman advancing towards them, she showed many symptoms of surprise and alarm, and assured her friend that she "felt fit to drop into the earth."

"Shall we turn back or run into a cottage?" asked Miss Price. "He don't see us yet."

"No, 'Tilda," replied Miss Squeers, "it is my duty to go through with it, and I will."

As Miss Squeers said this in the tone of one who has made a high moral decision, and was, besides, taken with one or two chokes and catchings of breath, telling of feelings at a high pressure, her friend made no further remark,

and they bore straight down upon Nicholas, who, walking with his eyes bent upon the ground, was not aware of their approach until they were close upon him; otherwise he might, perhaps, have taken shelter himself.

"Good morning," said Nicholas, bowing and passing by.

"He is going," murmured Miss Squeers. "I shall choke, Tilda."

"Come back, Mr. Nickleby, do!" cried Miss Price, pretending alarm at her friend's threat, but really moved by a wicked desire to hear what Nicholas would say. "Come back, Mr. Nickleby."

Mr. Nickleby came back, and looked as confused as might be, as he inquired whether the ladies had any commands for him.

"Don't stop to talk," urged Miss Price, hastily: "but support her on the other side. How do you feel now, dear?"

"Better," sighed Miss Squeers, laying a beaver bonnet of a reddish brown with a green veil attached on Mr. Nickleby's shoulder. "This foolish faintness!"

"Don't call it foolish, dear," said Miss Price: her bright eye dancing with merriment, as she saw the perplexity of Nicholas: "you have no reason to be ashamed of it. It's those who are too proud to come round again, without all this to-do, that ought to be ashamed."

"You are resolved to fix it upon me, I see," said Nicholas, smiling, "although I told you last night it was not my fault."

"There; he says it was not his fault, my dear," remarked the wicked Miss Price. "Perhaps you were too jealous, or too hasty with him? He says it was not his fault. You hear; I think that's apology enough."

"You will not understand me," said Nicholas. "Pray leave this joking, for I have no time, and really no desire to be the subject or cause of mirth just now."

"What do you mean?" asked Miss Price, pretending surprise.

"Don't ask him, 'Tilda," cried Miss Squeers; "I forgive him."

"Dear me," said Nicholas, as the brown bonnet went down on his shoulder again, "this is more serious than I supposed. Allow me! Will you have the goodness to hear me speak?"

Here he raised up the brown bonnet, and regarding with real astonishment a look of tender reproof from Miss Squeers, shrunk back a few paces to be out of the reach of the fair burden, and went on to say:

"I am very sorry—truly and sincerely sorry—for having been the cause of any difference among you last night. I blame myself most bitterly for having been so unfortunate as to cause the quarrel that occurred, although I did so, I assure you, out of pure thoughtlessness and ignorance."

"Well; that's not all you have got to say, surely," exclaimed Miss Price as Nicholas paused.

"I feel there is something more," stammered Nicholas with a half-smile and looking towards Miss Squeers, "it is a most awkward thing to say—but—the very mention of such an idea makes one seem conceited—still—may I ask if that lady supposes that I entertain any—in short, does she think that I am in love with her?"

"Delightful embarrassment," thought Miss Squeers, "I have brought him to it at last. Answer for me, dear," she whispered to her friend.

"Does she think so?" replied Miss Price. "Of course she does."

"She does!" exclaimed Nicholas with such energy of utterance as might have been, for the moment, mistaken for pleasure.

"Certainly," replied Miss Price.

"If Mr. Nickleby has doubted that, 'Tilda," said the

blushing Miss Squeers in soft accents, "he may set his mind at rest. His feelings are retur——"

"Stop!" cried Nicholas hurriedly. "Pray hear me. This is the greatest and wildest error, the completest and biggest mistake that ever human being laboured under, or committed. I have scarcely seen the young lady half a dozen times, but if I had seen her sixty times, or am likely to see her sixty thousand, it would be, and will be, precisely the same. I have not one thought, wish, or hope, connected with her, unless it be—and I say this, not to hurt her feelings, but to impress her with the real state of my own—unless it be the one object, dear to my heart as life itself, of being one day able to turn my back upon this accursed place, never to set foot in it again, or think of it—even think of it—but with hatred and disgust."

With this particularly plain and straightforward declaration, which he made with all the force that his indignant and excited feelings could bring to bear upon it, Nicholas, waiting to hear no more, retreated.

But poor Miss Squeers! Her anger, rage, and vexation; the rapid succession of bitter and passionate feelings that rushed through her mind are not to be described. Refused! refused by a teacher, picked up by advertisement, at an annual salary of five pounds payable at indefinite periods, and "found" in food and lodging like the very boys themselves; and this, too, in the presence of a little miller's daughter of eighteen, who was going to be married in three weeks' time, to a man who had gone down on his very knees to ask her! She could have choked in right good earnest, at the thought of being so humbled.

But there was one thing clear in the midst of her pain; and that was, that she hated and detested Nicholas with all the narrowness of mind and littleness of purpose worthy of a descendant of the house of Squeers. And there was one comfort too; and that was, that every hour in every

day she could wound his pride, and wound him with the infliction of some slight, or insult, which could not but have some effect on the most insensible person, and must be felt by one so sensitive as Nicholas. With these two reflections uppermost in her mind, Miss Squeers made the best of the matter to her friend, by observing that Mr. Nickleby was such an odd creature, and of such a violent temper, that she feared she should be obliged to give him up; and parted from her.

And here it may be remarked, that Miss Squeers, having given her affections (or whatever it might be that, in the absence of anything better, represented them) on Nicholas Nickleby, had never once seriously considered the possibility of his being of a different opinion from herself in the business. Miss Squeers reasoned that she was attractive and beautiful, and that her father was master, and Nicholas man, and that her father had saved money, and Nicholas had none, all of which seemed to her decisive arguments why the young man should feel only too much honoured by her preference. She had not failed to recollect, either, how much more agreeable she could render his situation if she were his friend, and how much more disagreeable if she were his enemy; and, doubtless, many less honest young gentlemen than Nicholas would have encouraged her folly, had it been only for this very obvious and intelligent reason. However, he had thought proper to do otherwise, and Miss Squeers was furious.

"Let him see," said the irritated young lady, when she had regained her own room, and eased her mind by boxing Phib's ears, "if I don't set mother against him a little more when she comes back!"

It was scarcely necessary to do this, but Miss Squeers was as good as her word; and poor Nicholas, in addition to bad food, dirty lodging, and the being compelled to witness one dull unvarying round of foul misery, was treated

with every special insult that evil minds could suggest, or the most grasping meanness put upon him.

Nor was this all. There was another and deeper system of annoyance which made his heart sink, and nearly drove him wild, by its injustice and cruelty.

The wretched creature, Smike, since the night Nicholas had spoken kindly to him in the schoolroom, had followed him to and fro, with an ever restless desire to serve or help him; anticipating such little wants as his humble ability could supply, and content only to be near him. He would sit beside him for hours, looking patiently into his face; and a word would brighten up his care-worn face and call into it a passing gleam, even of happiness. He was an altered being; he had an object now; and that object was, to show his attachment to the only person—that person a stranger—who had treated him, not to say with kindness, but like a human creature.

Upon this poor being, all the anger and ill-humour that could not be shown to Nicholas were unceasingly bestowed. Drudgery would have been nothing—Smike was well used to that. Blows inflicted without cause, would have been equally a matter of course; for to them also, he had served a long and weary apprenticeship; but it was no sooner observed that he had become attached to Nicholas, than bruises and blows, bruises and blows, morning, noon, and night, were his only portion. Squeers was jealous of the influence which his man had so soon acquired, and his family hated him, and Smike paid for both. Nicholas saw it, and ground his teeth at every repetition of the savage and cowardly attack.

He had arranged a few regular lessons for the boys; and one night as he paced up and down the dismal schoolroom, his swollen heart almost bursting to think that his protection and favour should have increased the misery of the wretched being whose peculiar helplessness had awakened

his pity, he paused mechanically in a dark corner where sat the object of his thoughts.

The poor soul was toiling hard over a torn book, with the traces of recent tears still upon his face; vainly endeavouring to master some task which a child of nine years old, possessed of ordinary powers, could have conquered with ease, but which, to the muddled brain of the crushed boy of nineteen, was a sealed and hopeless mystery. Yet there he sat, patiently going over the page again and again, urged by no boyish ambition, for he was the common joke even of the dreadful creatures that gathered about him, but inspired by the one eager desire to please his solitary friend.

Nicholas laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"I can't do it," said the dejected creature, looking up with bitter disappointment in every feature. "No, no."

"Do not try," replied Nicholas.

The boy shook his head, and closing the book with a sigh, looked vacantly round, and laid his head upon his arm. He was weeping.

"Do not, for God's sake," said Nicholas, in a voice of emotion. "I cannot bear to see you."

"They are more hard with me than ever," sobbed the boy.

"I know it," rejoined Nicholas. "They are."

"But for you," said the outcast, "I should die. They would kill me; they would; I know they would."

"You will do better, poor fellow," replied Nicholas, shaking his head mournfully, "when I am gone."

"Gone!" cried the other, looking intently into his face.

"Softly!" answered Nicholas. "Yes."

"Are you going?" demanded the boy in an earnest whisper.

"I cannot say," replied Nicholas. "I was speaking more to my own thoughts, than to you."

"Tell me," said the boy, imploringly, "oh, do tell me, *will you go—will you?*"

"I shall be driven to that at last!" said Nicholas. "The world is before me, after all."

"Tell me," urged Smike, "is the world as bad and dismal as this place?"

"Heaven forbid," replied Nicholas, pursuing the train of his own thoughts, "its hardest and coarsest labour were happiness to this."

"Should I ever meet you there?" demanded the boy, speaking with unusual wildness and speed.

"Yes," replied Nicholas, willing to quiet him.

"No, no!" said the other, gripping him by the hand. "Should I—should I—tell me that again. Say I should be sure to find you."

"You would," replied Nicholas, with the same humane intention, "and I would help you and aid you, and not bring fresh sorrow on you as I have done here."

The boy caught both the young man's hands passionately in his, and, hugging them to his breast, uttered a few broken sounds which were unintelligible. Squeers entered, at the moment, and he shrunk back into his old corner.

CHAPTER XI

Nicholas varies the monotony of Dotheboys Hall by a most vigorous and remarkable proceeding, which leads to consequences of some importance.

THE cold, feeble dawn of a January morning was stealing in at the windows of the common sleeping-room, when Nicholas, raising himself on his arm, looked among the

sleeping forms which on every side surrounded him, as though in search of some particular object.

It needed a quick eye to detect, from among the huddled mass of sleepers, the form of any given individual. As they lay closely packed together, covered, for warmth's sake, with their patched and ragged clothes, little could be distinguished but the sharp outlines of pale faces, over which the grey light shed the same dull heavy colour; with, here and there, a thin arm thrust forth; its thinness hidden by no covering, but fully exposed to view, in all its shrunken ugliness. There were some who, lying on their backs with upturned faces and clenched hands, just visible in the leaden light, bore more the aspect of dead bodies than of living creatures; and there were others curled up into strange and fantastic attitudes, such as might have been taken for the uneasy efforts of pain to gain some temporary relief, rather than the accidents of slumber. A few—and these were among the youngest of the children—slept peacefully on, with smiles upon their faces, dreaming perhaps of home; but ever and again a deep and heavy sigh, breaking the stillness of the room, announced that some new sleeper had awakened to the misery of another day; and, as morning took the place of night, the smiles gradually faded away, with the friendly darkness which had given them birth.

Dreams are the bright creatures of poem and legend, who sport on earth in the night season, and melt away in the first beam of the sun, which lights grim care and stern reality on their daily pilgrimage through the world.

Nicholas looked upon the sleepers; at first, with the air of one who gazes upon a scene which, though familiar to him, has lost none of its sorrowful effect in consequence; and, afterwards, with a more intense and searching look, as a man would, who missed something his eye was accustomed to meet, and had expected to rest upon. He was still

occupied in this search, and had half risen from his bed in the eagerness of his quest, when the voice of Squeers was heard, calling from the bottom of the stairs.

"Now then," cried that gentleman, "are you going to sleep all day, up there——"

"You lazy hounds?" added Mrs. Squeers, finishing the sentence.

"We shall be down directly, sir," replied Nicholas.

"Down directly!" said Squeers. "Ah; you had better be down directly, or I'll be down on some of you in less. Where's that Smike?"

Nicholas looked hurriedly round again, but made no answer.

"Smike!" shouted Squeers.

"Do you want your head broke in a fresh place, Smike?" demanded his amiable lady in the same tone.

Still there was no reply, and still Nicholas stared about him, as did the greater part of the boys, who were by this time aroused.

"Confound his impudence!" muttered Squeers, rapping the stair-rail impatiently with his cane. "Nickleby!"

"Well, sir."

"Send that obstinate scoundrel down; don't you hear me calling?"

"He is not here, sir," replied Nicholas.

"Don't tell me a lie," retorted the schoolmaster. "He is."

"He is not," retorted Nicholas angrily, "don't tell me one."

"We shall soon see that," said Mr. Squeers, rushing upstairs. "I'll find him, I warrant you."

With which assurance, Mr. Squeers bounded into the dormitory, and swinging his cane in the air ready for a blow, darted into the corner where the lean body of the drudge was usually stretched at night. The cane de-

scended harmlessly upon the ground. There was nobody there.

"What does this mean?" said Squeers, turning round with a very pale face. "Where have you hid him?"

"I have seen nothing of him, since last night," replied Nicholas.

"Come," said Squeers, evidently frightened, though he endeavoured to look otherwise, "you won't save him that way. Where is he?"

"At the bottom of the nearest pond for aught I know," replied Nicholas in a low voice, and fixing his eyes full on the master's face.

"Damn you, what do you mean by that?" retorted Squeers in great alarm. Without waiting for a reply, he inquired of the boys whether any one among them knew anything of their missing schoolfellow.

There was a general hum of anxious denial, in the midst of which, one shrill voice was heard to say (as, indeed, everybody thought):

"Please, sir, I think Smike's run away, sir."

"Ha!" cried Squeers, turning sharp round. "Who said that?"

"Tomkins, please, sir," replied a chorus of voices. Mr. Squeers made a plunge into the crowd, and at one dive, caught a very little boy, dressed still in his night clothes, and the perplexed expression of whose face as he was brought forward, seemed to suggest that he was as yet uncertain whether he was about to be punished or rewarded for the suggestion. He was not long in doubt.

"You think he has run away, do you, sir?" demanded Squeers.

"Yes, please, sir," replied the little boy.

"And what, sir," said Squeers, catching the little boy suddenly by the arms and whipping up his clothes in a most skilful manner, "what reason have you to suppose

that any boy would want to run away from this establishment? Eh, sir?"

The child raised a dismal cry, by way of answer, and Mr. Squeers, throwing himself into the most favourable attitude for exercising his strength, beat him until the little wretch in his writhings actually rolled out of his hands, when he mercifully allowed him to roll away, as best he could.

"There," said Squeers. "Now if any other boy thinks Smike has run away, I should be glad to have a talk with him."

There was, of course, a profound silence, during which Nicholas showed his disgust as plainly as looks could show it.

"Well, Nickleby," said Squeers, eyeing him wickedly. "You think he has run away, I suppose?"

"I think it extremely likely," replied Nicholas, in a quiet manner.

"Oh, you do, do you?" sneered Squeers. "Maybe you know he has?"

"I know nothing of the kind."

"He didn't tell you he was going, I suppose, did he?" sneered Squeers.

"He did not," replied Nicholas; "I am very glad he did not, for it would then have been my duty to have warned you, in time."

"Which no doubt you would have been devilish sorry to do," said Squeers in a tone meant to wound.

"I should indeed," replied Nicholas. "You interpret my feelings with great accuracy."

Mrs. Squeers had listened to this conversation, from the bottom of the stairs: but now losing all patience, she hastily put on her night-jacket, and made her way to the scene of action.

"What's all this here to do?" said the lady, as the boys

fell off right and left, to save her the trouble of clearing a passage with her muscular arms. "What on earth are you a-talking to him for, Squeery!"

"Why, my dear," said Squeers, "the fact is that Smike is not to be found."

"Well, I know that," said the lady, "and where's the wonder? If you get a parcel of proud-stomached teachers that set the young dogs a-rebelling, what else can you look for? Now, young man, you just have the kindness to take yourself off to the schoolroom, and take the boys off with you, and don't you stir out of there 'till you have leave given you, or you and I may fall out in a way that'll spoil your beauty, handsome as you think yourself, and so I tell you."

"Indeed!" said Nicholas.

"Yes; and indeed and indeed again, Mister Jackanapes," said the excited lady; "and I wouldn't keep such as you in the house, another hour, if I had my way."

"Nor would you if I had mine," replied Nicholas. "Now, boys!"

"Ah! Now, boys," said Mrs. Squeers, imitating as nearly as she could the voice and manner of the assistant. "Follow your leader, boys, and take pattern by Smike if you dare. See what he'll get for himself, when he is brought back; and, mind! I tell you that you shall have as bad, and twice as bad, if you so much as open your mouths about him."

"If I catch him," said Squeers, "I'll only stop short of skinning him alive. I give you notice, boys."

"If you catch him," retorted Mrs. Squeers, contemptuously, "you are sure to; you can't help it, if you go the right way to work. Come! Away with you!"

With these words, Mrs. Squeers dismissed the boys, and after a few light battles with those in the rear who were pressing forward to get out of the way, but were detained

for a few moments by the crowd in front, succeeded in clearing the room, when she confronted her husband alone.

"He is off," said Mrs. Squeers. "The cow-house and stable are locked up so he can't be there; and he's not downstairs anywhere, for the girl has looked. He must have gone York way, and by a public road, too."

"Why must he?" inquired Squeers.

"Stupid!" said Mrs. Squeers angrily. "He hadn't any money, had he?"

"Never had a penny of his own in his whole life, that I know of," replied Squeers.

"To be sure," said Mrs. Squeers, "and he didn't take anything to eat with him; that I'll answer for Ha! ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Squeers.

"Then, of course," said Mrs. Squeers, "he must beg his way, and he could do that nowhere but on the public road."

"That's true," exclaimed Squeers, clapping his hands.

"True! Yes; but you would never have thought of it, for all that, if I hadn't said so," replied his wife. "Now, if you take the cart and go one road, and I borrow Swallow's cart and go the other, what with keeping our eyes open, and asking questions, one or other of us is pretty certain to lay hold of him."

The worthy lady's plan was adopted and put in execution without a moment's delay. After a very hasty breakfast, and the making of some inquiries in the village, the result of which seemed to show that he was on the right track, Squeers started forth in the pony-cart, intent upon discovery and vengeance. Shortly afterwards, Mrs. Squeers, dressed in the white top-coat, and tied up in various shawls and handkerchiefs, set out in another cart and another direction, taking with her a good-sized club, several odd pieces of strong cord, and a stout working man: all provided and

carried upon the expedition, with the sole object of assisting in the capture, and (once caught) insuring the safe custody of the unfortunate Smike.

Nicholas remained behind, in a tumult of feeling, aware that whatever might be the result of the boy's flight, nothing but painful and pitiful consequences were likely to come from it. Death, from want and exposure to the weather, was the best that could be expected from the lengthy wanderings of so poor and helpless a creature, alone and unfriended, through a country of which he was wholly ignorant. There was little, perhaps, to choose between this fate and a return to the tender mercies of the Yorkshire school; but the unhappy being had established a hold upon his sympathy and compassion, which made his heart ache at the prospect of the suffering he was destined to undergo. He lingered on, in restless anxiety, picturing a thousand possibilities, until the evening of the next day, when Squeers returned, alone, and unsuccessful.

"No news of the scoundrel!" said the schoolmaster, who had evidently been stretching his legs, on the old principle, not a few times during the journey. "I'll have consolation for this out of somebody, Nickleby, if Mrs. Squeers don't hunt him down; so I give you warning."

"It is not in my power to console you, sir," said Nicholas. "It is nothing to me."

"Isn't it?" said Squeers in a threatening manner. "We shall see!"

"We shall," replied Nicholas.

"Here's the pony run off his legs, and me obliged to come home with a hired horse, that'll cost fifteen shillings besides other expenses," said Squeers; "who's to pay for that, do you hear?"

Nicholas shrugged his shoulders and remained silent.

"I'll have it out of somebody, I tell you," said Squeers his usual harsh cunning manner changed to open bullying

"None of your whining nonsense here, Mr. Puppy, but be off to your kennel, for it's past your bedtime! Come! Get out!"

Nicholas bit his lips and closed his hands involuntarily, for his finger-ends longed to avenge the insult; but remembering that the man was drunk, and that it could come to little but a noisy fight, he contented himself with darting a contemptuous look at the tyrant, and walked, as majestically as he could, upstairs; not a little angered, however, to observe that Miss Squeers and Master Squeers, and the servant girl, were enjoying the scene from a comfortable corner: the two former indulging in many improving remarks about the pride of poor upstarts, which occasioned a vast deal of laughter, in which even the most miserable of all miserable servant girls joined: while Nicholas, stung to the heart, drew over his head such bed-clothes as he had, and sternly resolved that the outstanding account between himself and Mr. Squeers should be settled rather more speedily than the latter anticipated.

Another day came, and Nicholas was scarcely awake when he heard the wheels of a cart approaching the house. It stopped. The voice of Mrs. Squeers was heard, and in triumph, ordering a glass of spirits for somebody, which was in itself a sufficient sign that something extraordinary had happened. Nicholas hardly dared to look out of the window; but he did so, and the very first object that met his eyes was the wretched Smike: so coated with mud and rain, so white and worn, and wild, that, but for his garments being such as no scarecrow was ever seen to wear, he might have been doubtful, even then, of his identity.

"Lift him out," said Squeers, after he had feasted his eyes, in silence, upon the criminal. "Bring him in; bring him in!"

"Take care," cried Mrs. Squeers, as her husband offered his assistance. "We tied his legs under the apron and

made 'em fast to the cart to prevent his giving us the slip again."

With hands trembling with delight, Squeers unloosened the cord; and Smike, to all appearance more dead than alive, was brought into the house and securely locked up in a cellar, until such time as Mr. Squeers should think it fit to operate upon him, in the presence of the assembled school.

Upon a hasty consideration of the circumstances, it may be a matter of surprise to some persons, that Mr. and Mrs. Squeers should have taken so much trouble to get back a burden of which it was their custom to complain so loudly: but their surprise will cease when they are informed that the numerous services of the drudge, if performed by anybody else, would have cost the establishment some ten or twelve shillings a week in the shape of wages; and furthermore, that all runaways were as a matter of policy made severe examples of, at Dotheboys Hall, inasmuch as, in consequence of the limited extent of its attractions, there was but little reason, beyond the powerful impulse of fear, for any pupil, provided with the usual number of legs and the power of using them, to remain.

The news that Smike had been caught and brought back in triumph ran like wildfire through the hungry community, and expectation was on tiptoe all the morning. On tiptoe it was destined to remain, however, until afternoon; when Squeers, having refreshed himself with his dinner, and further strengthened himself by an extra drink or so, made his appearance (accompanied by his amiable partner) with a terrible, threatening countenance and a fearful cane, strong, supple and new—in short, purchased that morning, specially for the occasion.

"Is everybody here?" asked Squeers, in a tremendous voice.

Everybody was there, but every boy was afraid to speak;

so Squeers glared along the lines to assure himself; and every eye drooped, and every head cowered down, as he did so.

"Each boy keep his place," said Squeers, administering his favourite blow to the desk, and regarding with gloomy satisfaction the universal start which it never failed to occasion. "Nickleby! to your desk, sir!"

It was remarked by more than one small observer, that there was a very curious and unusual expression in the assistant's face; but he took his seat without opening his lips in reply. Squeers, casting a triumphant glance at his assistant, and a look of most comprehensive tyranny on the boys, left the room, and shortly afterwards returned, dragging Smike by the collar—or rather by that fragment of his jacket which was nearest the place where his collar would have been had he boasted such a decoration.

In any other place, the appearance of the wretched, worn-out, spiritless object would have occasioned a murmur of compassion and reproof. It had some effect, even there; for the lookers-on moved uneasily in their seats; and a few of the boldest ventured to steal looks at each other, expressive of indignation and pity.

They were lost on Squeers, however, whose gaze was fastened on the luckless Smike, as he inquired, according to custom in such cases, whether he had anything to say for himself.

"Nothing, I suppose?" said Squeers, with a devilish grin.

Smike glanced round, and his eye rested, for an instant, on Nicholas, as if he had expected him to help; but his look was fixed on his desk.

"Have you anything to say?" demanded Squeers again, swinging his right arm two or three times to try its power and suppleness. "Stand a little out of the way, Mrs. Squeers, my dear; I've hardly got room enough."

"Spare me, sir!" cried Smike.

"Oh! that's all, is it?" said Squeers. "Yes, I'll flog you within an inch of your life, and spare you that."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Mrs. Squeers, "that's a good 'un!"

"I was driven to it," said Smike, faintly; and casting another pleading look about him.

"Driven to it, were you?" said Squeers. "Oh! it wasn't your fault; it was mine, I suppose—eh?"

"A nasty, ungrateful, pig-headed, brutish, obstinate, sneaking dog," exclaimed Mrs. Squeers, taking Smike's head under her arm, and administering a cuff at every word: "what does he mean by that?"

"Stand aside, my dear," replied Squeers. "We'll try and find out."

Mrs. Squeers, being out of breath with her efforts, did so. Squeers caught the boy firmly in his grip: one desperate cut had fallen on his body—he was writhing from the lash and uttering a scream of pain—it was raised again, and again about to fall—when Nicholas Nickleby, suddenly starting up, cried "Stop!" in a voice that made the roof ring.

"Who cried stop?" said Squeers, turning savagely round.

"I," said Nicholas, stepping forward. "This must not go on."

"Must not go on!" cried Squeers, almost in a shriek.

"No!" thundered Nicholas.

Aghast and stupefied by the boldness of the interference, Squeers released his hold of Smike, and, falling back a pace or two, gazed upon Nicholas with looks that were positively frightful.

"I say must not," repeated Nicholas, nothing frightened; "shall not. I will prevent it."

Squeers continued to gaze upon him, with his eyes starting out of his head; but astonishment actually, for the moment, prevented him from speech.

"You have disregarded all my quiet interference in the

miserable lad's behalf," said Nicholas; "you have returned no answer to the letter in which I begged forgiveness for him, and offered to be responsible that he would remain quietly here. Don't blame me for this public interference. You have brought it upon yourself; not I."

"Sit down, beggar!" screamed Squeers, almost beside himself with rage, and seizing Smike as he spoke.

"Wretch," retorted Nicholas fiercely, "touch him at your peril! I will not stand by and see it done. My blood is up, and I have the strength of ten such men as you. Look to yourself, for by Heaven I will not spare you, if you drive me on!"

"Stand back," cried Squeers, waving his weapon.

"I have a long series of insults to avenge," said Nicholas, flushed with passion; "and my indignation is the greater for the cowardly cruelties practised on helpless children in this foul den. Have a care; for if you do raise the devil within me, the consequences shall fall heavily upon your own head!"

He had scarcely spoken, when Squeers, in a violent outbreak of wrath, and with a cry like the howl of a wild beast, spat upon him, and struck him a blow across the face with his instrument of torture, which raised up a bar of bruised flesh as it was inflicted. Smarting with the agony of the blow, and concentrating into that one moment all his feelings of rage, scorn and indignation, Nicholas sprang upon him, twisted the weapon from his hand, and pinning him by the throat, beat the scoundrel till he roared for mercy.

The boys—with the exception of Master Squeers, who, coming to his father's assistance, worried the enemy in the rear—moved not, hand or foot; but Mrs. Squeers, with many shrieks for aid, hung on to the tail of her partner's coat, and endeavoured to drag him from his infuriated opponent; while Miss Squeers, who had been peeping



Nicholas beat the scoundrel till he roared for mercy

through the keyhole in expectation of a very different scene, darted in at the very beginning of the attack, and after launching a shower of ink-stands at the assistant's head, beat Nicholas to her heart's content; encouraging herself, at every blow, with the recollection of his having refused her offered love, and thus imparting additional strength to an arm which (as she took after her mother in this respect) was, at no time, one of the weakest.

Nicholas, in the full flood of his violence, felt the blows no more than if they had been dealt with feathers; but, becoming tired of the noise and uproar, and feeling that his arm grew weak besides, he threw all his remaining strength into half a dozen finishing cuts, and flung Squeers from him with all the force he could find. The violence of his fall threw Mrs. Squeers completely over a nearby form; and Squeers, striking his head against it in his descent, lay at his full length on the ground, stunned and motionless.

Having brought affairs to this happy end, and found out to his thorough satisfaction, that Squeers was only stunned, and not dead (upon which point he had some unpleasant doubts at first), Nicholas left his family to restore him, and retired to consider what course he had better take. He looked anxiously round for Smike, as he left the room, but he was nowhere to be seen.

After a brief consideration, he packed up a few clothes in a small leather bag, and, finding that nobody offered to oppose his progress, marched boldly out by the front door, and shortly afterwards, struck into the road which led to Greta Bridge.

When he had cooled sufficiently to be enabled to give his present circumstances some little reflection, they did not appear in a very encouraging light; he had only four shillings and a few pence in his pocket, and was something more than two hundred and fifty miles from London, whither he resolved to direct his steps, that he might dis-

cover, among other things, what account of the morning's proceedings Mr. Squeers sent to his most affectionate uncle.

Lifting up his eyes, as he arrived at the conclusion that there was no remedy for this unfortunate state of things, he beheld a horseman coming towards him, whom, on nearer approach, he discovered, to his great regret, to be no other than Mr. John Browdie, who, dressed in breeches and leather leggings, was urging his animal forward by means of a thick ash stick, which seemed to have been recently cut from some stout young tree.

"I am in no mood for more noise and riot," thought Nicholas, "and yet, do what I will, I shall have a quarrel with this honest blockhead, and perhaps a blow or two from that stick."

In truth, there appeared some reason to expect that such a result would follow from the encounter, for John Browdie no sooner saw Nicholas advancing, than he reined in his horse by the footpath, and waited until such time as he should come up; looking meanwhile, very sternly between the horse's ears, at Nicholas, as he came on at his leisure.

"Servant, young gentleman," said John.

"Yours," said Nicholas.

"Well, we have met at last," observed John, making the stirrup ring under a smart touch of the ash stick.

"Yes," replied Nicholas, hesitating. "Come!" he said, frankly, after a moment's pause, "we parted on no very good terms the last time we met; it was my fault, I believe; but I had no intention of offending you, and had no idea that I was doing so. I was very sorry for it, afterwards. Will you shake hands?"

"Shake hands!" cried the good-humoured Yorkshireman; "ah! that I will"; at the same time, he bent down from the saddle, and gave Nicholas's fist a huge wrench: "but what is the matter with your face, man? It's all broken like."

"It is a cut," said Nicholas, turning scarlet as he spoke—"a blow; but I returned it to the giver, and with good interest too."

"No, did you though?" exclaimed John Browdie. "Well done! I like you for that."

"The fact is," said Nicholas, not very well knowing how to make the confession, "the fact is, that I have been ill-treated."

"No!" said John Browdie, in a tone of sympathy; for he was a giant in strength and height, and Nicholas, very likely, in his eyes, seemed a mere dwarf; "don't say that."

"Yes, I have," replied Nicholas, "by that man Squeers, and I have beaten him soundly, and am leaving this place in consequence."

"What!" cried John Browdie, with such a joyful shout, that the horse was quite frightened at it. "Beaten the schoolmaster! Ho! ho! ho! Beaten the schoolmaster! who ever heard of the like of that now. Give me your hand again, youngster. Beaten the schoolmaster! Dash it, I love you for it."

With these expressions of delight, John Browdie laughed and laughed again—so loud that the echoes, far and wide, sent back nothing but cheerful shouts of merriment—and shook Nicholas by the hand meanwhile, no less heartily. When his mirth had subsided, he inquired what Nicholas meant to do; on his informing him, to go straight to London, he shook his head doubtfully, and inquired if he knew how much coaches charged, to carry passengers so far.

"No, I do not," said Nicholas; "but it's of no great consequence to me, for I intend walking."

"Going to walk to London on foot!" cried John, in amazement.

"Every step of the way," replied Nicholas. "I should be many steps farther on by this time, and so good-bye!"

"No, now," replied the honest countryman, pulling in

his impatient horse, "stand still, I tell you. How much money have you got?"

"Not much," said Nicholas, colouring, "but I can make it enough. Where there's a will, there's a way, you know."

John Browdie made no spoken answer to this remark, but putting his hand in his pocket, pulled out an old purse of dirty leather, and insisted that Nicholas should borrow from him whatever he required for his present necessities.

"Don't be afraid, man," he said; "take enough to carry you home. You will pay me one day, I'll warrant."

Nicholas could by no means be prevailed upon to borrow more than a pound, with which loan Mr. Browdie, after many entreaties that he would accept of more (observing, with a touch of Yorkshire caution, that if he didn't spend it all he could put the extra by till he had an opportunity of sending it carriage free) had to content himself.

"Take that bit of timber to help you on with, man," he added, pressing his stick on Nicholas, and giving his hand another squeeze; "keep a good heart, and bless you. Beaten the schoolmaster! It's the best thing I've heard these twenty years!"

So saying, and indulging, with more delicacy than might have been expected from him, in another series of loud laughs, for the purpose of avoiding the thanks which Nicholas poured forth, John Browdie set spurs to his horse, and went off at a smart pace; looking back from time to time, as Nicholas stood gazing after him, and waving his hand cheerily, as if to encourage him on his way. Nicholas watched the horse and rider until they disappeared over the top of a distant hill, and then set forward on his journey.

He did not travel far that afternoon, for by this time it was nearly dark, and there had been a heavy fall of snow, which not only rendered the way heavy, but the track uncertain and difficult to find, after daylight, except by experienced travellers. He lay, that night, at a cottage, where

beds were let at a cheap rate to the more humble class of travellers; and, rising early next morning, made his way before night to Boroughbridge. Passing through that town in search of some cheap resting-place, he stumbled upon an empty barn within a couple of hundred yards of the road-side; in a warm corner of which he stretched his weary limbs, and soon fell asleep.

When he awoke next morning, and tried to recollect his dreams, which had been all connected with his recent stay at Dotheboys Hall, he sat up, rubbed his eyes, and stared—not with the calmest look possible—at some motionless object which seemed to be stationed within a few yards in front of him.

“Strange!” cried Nicholas; “can this be some lingering creation of the visions that have scarcely left me! It cannot be real—and yet—I am awake! Smike!”

The form moved, rose, and advanced, and dropped upon its knees at his feet. It was Smike indeed.

“Why do you kneel to me?” said Nicholas, hastily raising him.

“To go with you—anywhere—everywhere—to the world’s end—to the churchyard grave,” replied Smike, clinging to his hand. “Let me, oh do let me. You are my home—my kind friend—take me with you, pray.”

“I am a friend who can do little for you,” said Nicholas kindly. “How came you here?”

He had followed him, it seemed; had never lost sight of him all the way; had watched while he slept, and when he halted for refreshment; and had feared to appear, before, lest he should be sent back. He had not intended to appear now, but Nicholas had awakened more suddenly than he looked for, and he had no time to conceal himself.

“Poor fellow!” said Nicholas. “Your hard fate denies you any friend but one, and he is nearly as poor and helpless as yourself.”

"May I—may I go with you?" asked Smike, timidly. "I will be your faithful, hard-working servant, I will, indeed. I want no clothes," added the poor creature, drawing his rags together; "these will do very well, I only want to be near you."

"And you shall," cried Nicholas. "And the world shall deal by you as it does by me, till one or both of us shall leave it for a better. Come!"

With these words, he strapped his burden on his shoulders, and taking his stick in one hand, extended the other to his delighted charge; and so they passed out of the old barn, together.

GLOSSARY

The only abbreviations are n for noun, v. for verb, adj. for adjective, s. for somebody or something and esp. for especially.

A

- ABBEY**: building occupied by men (monks) or women (nuns) who are members of a religious organization.
- ABBREVIATION**: short form of something, usually a word.
- ABILITY**: 1. power to do something. 2. cleverness.
- ABLE**: 1. having power to do. 2. clever, skilful.
- ABOLISH**: put a stop to.
- ABROAD**: 1. out of the country. 2. out of doors.
- ABRUPT, ABRUPTLY**: quick(ly), sudden(ly).
- ABSENTLY**: without paying attention.
- ABSURD**: laughable, foolish, unreasonable.
- ABSURDLY**: in a laughable, foolish, unreasonable way.
- ACADEMY**: originally the garden in which Plato taught, from which a place of serious study, but often a well-sounding name for a bad school.
- ACCENT**: 1. the weight given to a word or part of a word. 2. special way of speaking.
- ACCEPTABLE**: worth accepting, pleasing, welcome.
- ACCOMMODATE**: change a thing or person to suit another.
- ACCOMMODATING**: easily changed, ready to do what is wanted.
- ACCOMMODATION**: 1. space, rooms in a house. 2. a change to suit some purpose.
- ACCOMPANY**: go with.
- ACCOMPLISH**: succeed in doing.
- ACCOMPLISHED**: skilled in the arts that please society.
- ACCOMPLISHMENT**: 1. finishing something. 2. something (e.g. singing, playing piano, drawing) that pleases other people on social occasions.
- ACCOUNT**: turn to account: make use of.
- ACCURACY**: exact truth, state of being without the smallest mistake.
- ACCURSED**: under a curse, hateful.
- ACKNOWLEDGE**: 1. admit the truth of. 2. say one has received.
- ACQUAINTANCE**: 1. knowledge of a person or a fact, etc. 2. man known.
- ACQUAINTED**: having knowledge of.
- ACQUIRE**: obtain, get.
- ACT** n.: something done, a law made by parliament.
- ADAPT**: fit a thing to another, make suitable for a purpose.
- ADDITIONAL**: in addition.

- ADDRESS v.: 1. speak to. 2. write directions on e.g. an envelope.
3. prepare to do.
- ADJECTIVE: a word that adds to the meaning of a noun.
- ADJOINING: joined to, next to.
- ADJUST: arrange, put in order, change to fit s.
- ADMINISTER: 1. manage (affairs). 2. give s. to somebody.
- ADMIT: 1. allow to enter. 2. accept s. as true. 3. leave room for (admit of improvement).
- ADORE: love and worship.
- AFFECTED: pretended.
- AFFECTION: 1. feeling. 2. feeling of love.
- AFFECTIONATE: loving.
- AFFORD: 1. be rich enough, manage to spare. 2. give a chance, etc.
- AGHAST: with great surprise and fear.
- AGITATION: moving, shaking, disturbance of mind or body.
- AGONY: severe pain.
- AGREEABLE: pleasing.
- AID n.: help.
- AID v.: give help to.
- AIR: 1. the gas round the earth. 2. manner or way of doing things.
3. give oneself airs, be proud.
- AIRY: 1. with plenty of air. 2. with nothing solid about it, unreal.
- ALARM n.: fear.
- ALARM v.: frighten.
- ALCOHOL: the liquid in wine that makes a man drunk.
- ALCOHOLIC: containing alcohol.
- ALE: an alcoholic drink made from grain, beer.
- ALGEBRA: study of the science of numbers by means of general signs, letters, in place of particular numbers.
- ALLOT: give out.
- ALLOWABLE: can be permitted.
- ALLOWANCE: 1. permission. 2. amount of money paid regularly.
- ALTAR n.: centre of church ceremonies, esp. marriage.
- ALTER v.: change.
- ALTERNATELY: first one, then the other.
- AMAZEMENT: strong surprise.
- AMEN: so be it (usually at end of a prayer).
- AMIALE: likeable, lovable.
- AMIABLY: in a likeable way.
- AMIDST: in the middle of.
- AMPLE: large, plentiful, quite enough.
- ANCESTOR: those from whom one's father or mother is descended.
- ANGEL: heavenly spirit, messenger of God.
- ANNOUNCE: say, give out.
- ANNOUNCEMENT: thing said, piece of news.
- ANTICIPATE: look forward to.
- ANTIQUITY: old times, thing made or built in old times.
- APARTMENT: room.
- APPARENT: 1. appearing to be. 2. clearly seen.
- APPARENTLY: according to appearances.
- APPEAL v.: ask seriously for, ask a higher authority to change the decision of a lower one.
- APPETITE: desire, hunger.

- APPLY: 1. to put close to. 2. to work hard at. 3. ask for help.
 APPREHENSION: 1. taking hold of. 2. understanding. 3. fear.
 APPRENTICESHIP: arrangement by which a boy goes to a skilled worker to learn his trade, a beginning at any job.
 APPROACH: come nearer.
 APRON: article of clothing worn to keep dirt off dress.
 AQUILINE: like an eagle, nose like an eagle's beak.
 ARITHMETIC: the study of numbers.
 AROUSE: to wake up, to bring out.
 ARTFUL: clever in a bad, tricky way.
 ASCERTAIN: find out.
 ASH: kind of tree.
 ASPECT: appearance of somebody or s., direction. a building faces, angle, point of view, on question.
 ASS: donkey, animal thought to be foolish.
 ASSEMBLE: collect together.
 ASSEMBLY: collection, gathering.
 ASSENT n.: agreement.
 ASSENT v.: agree.
 ASSERT v.: to say with emphasis.
 ASSIST: help.
 ASSISTANCE: help.
 ASSISTANT: helper.
 ASSUME: 1. take for oneself. 2. take as certain.
 ASSURANCE: 1. statement. 2. confidence. 3. over-confidence leading to pride.
 ASSURE: make someone sure of s.
 ASTRAY: off the right way.
 ASTRONOMY: study of the stars.
 ATTACH: fix (things together), bind in friendship.
 ATTACHMENT: 1. thing fixed to another. 2. friendship or love.
 ATTEND: 1. give the mind to. 2. be present at. 3. wait upon.
 ATTENDANCE: 1. being present. 2. waiting upon. 3. number of people present.
 ATTENDANT: one whose business it is to wait on e.g. a king.
 ATTIC: small room under the roof.
 ATTITUDE: way of sitting or standing, way of thinking about things.
 AVAIL: be successful or helpful.
 AVENGE: take revenge for s.
 AWAKEN: wake up.
 AWARE: knowing.

B

- BACHELOR: unmarried man.
 BACHELORSHIP: being unmarried.
 BALCONY: stage built out from a house above street level, used for sitting watching the street.
 BANG v.: 1. make a sharp noise. 2. give a sharp blow to.
 BAR: 1. long piece of wood, metal, etc. 2. a thing in the way, a barrier.
 3. a place where strong drink is sold.
 BARN: building used as store on farm, etc.

BRUISE n.: dark mark on flesh caused by blow.

BRUISE v.: to cause such a mark

BRUTE: animal (usually in a bad sense).

BRUTISH: as bad as an animal.

BUBBLE: 1. easily broken ball with air inside (soap bubble). 2. false hope.

BULLY: one who finds pleasure in cruelty.

BUMP v.: come together with a heavy noise.

BUN: a kind of small cake.

BUOYANCY: 1. ability to float in water 2. rising to the top of e.g. troubles.

BUOYANT: 1. floating easily. 2. hopeful, rising above difficulties.

BURDEN: heavy load.

BUSTLE v.: make a great deal of noise and quick movement.

BUSTLING: making noise and moving quickly.

BUTCHER: man who sells meat.

BUZZ n.: noise like that of a bee.

BY THE BYE: by the way.

C

CAB: carriage for hire.

CANDIDATE: one who puts himself or is put forward for a position, one who comes to take an examination.

CANDLE: stick of wax round cotton, used for light.

CANE n.: thin stick.

CAPITAL: 1. money kept to make more money. 2. money that starts a business.

CAPITALIST: a man having capital.

CAPTURE n.: making prisoner.

CAREER: 1. working life. 2. events in one's life.

CARVE v.: cut in wood and stone.

CASEMENT: a window.

CAST v.: throw

CATHEDRAL: important church.

CEASE v.: stop.

CEASELESS: not stopping.

CEASELESSLY: without stopping.

CEILING: the top of a room in a house.

CELL: 1. single room in prison or religious house. 2. single division in wax building of bees. 3. means of storing electricity. 4. unit of living matter.

CELLAR: room under a house.

CHAP: man.

CHAPEL: small church.

CHARCOAL: used for making fires, made from slow burning of wood.

CHARITABLE: generous.

CHARITY: 1. loving kindness. 2. giving money to poor. 3. money given to poor.

CHATTER: 1. talk quickly and not necessarily sensibly. 2. (of teeth) to knock together with cold.

- CHILL: cold.
- CHIN: part of face below mouth.
- CHIRP v.: make a noise like a sparrow.
- CHOICE adj.: well-chosen.
- CHOKER: 1. prevent s. from breathing by hands round his neck. 2. get something in the throat preventing breathing.
- CHORUS: 1. group of people speaking, singing or dancing as one. 2. speak as one.
- CIGAR: tobacco leaves rolled ready for smoking.
- CINDER: hard remains of partly burned coal or wood.
- CIRCUMSTANCE: surroundings of something (time, place, manner, cause, etc.).
- CIVIL: 1. not military. 2. polite.
- CLAP v.: 1. strike hands together. 2. strike with flat of hand.
- CLASH: 1. noise as of metal plates striking together. 2. come together in disagreement.
- CLASP v.: 1. hold one hand with another. 2. fasten.
- CLASSICAL: to do with civilization of Greece or Rome.
- CLAUSE: one part of a bill or act of parliament.
- CLENCH v.: shut tightly.
- CLERGYMAN: priest especially of Church of England.
- CLING: hold tightly to.
- CLOAK: article of clothing hung from shoulders.
- CLOISTER: covered walk in a religious house.
- CLUB: thick stick.
- CLUE: fact or thing that serves as a guide.
- CLUMSILY: awkwardly.
- COACH: carriage drawn by horses.
- COFFIN: box in which dead body is buried.
- COLUMN: 1. tall upright of stone, etc., supporting roof or alone in memory of s. 2. line of print in newspaper. 3. line of smoke in air.
- COMMENCE: begin.
- COMMEND: praise.
- COMMIT: do.
- COMMIT ONESELF: take a step from which there is no return.
- COMMONPLACE: ordinary, dull.
- COMMUNICATE: tell, give information to.
- COMMUNICATIONS: 1. information given. 2. means of travelling or sending news.
- COMMUNITY: group of persons living in one place, or sharing one interest.
- COMPARTMENT: walled-off space in e.g. room or railway carriage.
- COMPASSION: pity.
- COMPEL: force.
- COMPLAINT: 1. saying one is wronged. 2. disease.
- COMPLIMENT: 1. pleasant remark about s. 2. greetings.
- COMPOUND: made of several parts.
- COMPREHENSIVE: inclusive.
- COMPROMISE: 1. settle a difference by taking a middle course. 2. middle course so taken.
- COMPULSORY: necessary, forced.
- CONCEAL: hide.

CONCEITED: having a high opinion of oneself with no good reason.

CONCEIVE: 1. start a thought, idea in mind. 2. start to bear a child.

CONCENTRATE: 1. bring things together at a point. 2. bring all one's powers into action.

CONCLUDE: 1. bring to an end. 2. come to think as result of reasoning.

CONCLUSION: 1. end. 2. end of a train of thought.

CONDESCEND: act with false politeness to inferior, appear to be kind but really treat as inferior.

CONDESCENSION: false kindness hiding pride.

CONDUCT: behaviour.

CONFIDE: trust.

CONFIDENTIAL: secret (secret is a little stronger than confidential).

CONFINE: 1. shut in. 2. limit.

CONFIRM: make stronger, more certain.

CONFOUND: a fairly polite swear word.

CONFRONT: bring face to face.

CONSEQUENCE: result.

CONSEQUENTLY: as a result.

CONSIDERABLE: fairly large.

CONSIDERABLY: a good deal.

CONSIDERATE: thoughtful about the needs, wishes of others.

CONSOLATION: comfort.

CONSOLE: comfort.

CONSTANT: unchanging, faithful.

CONSUMPTION: 1. using up. 2. eating up. 3. a disease of the chest.

CONTEMPLATE: look at and think about, consider.

CONTEMPLATION: thought.

CONTEMPT: feeling that something or somebody is worthless.

CONTEMPTUOUSLY: in a way that shows the feeling that the person or thing is worthless.

CONTEND: 1. struggle. 2. try to get an idea accepted.

CONTENTS: that which is contained by s.

CONTEST: struggle, fight, race, competition.

CONTINENT: large mass of land, Europe, America, Africa, Asia or Australia; the Continent is Europe.

CONTINUAL: going on for a long time.

CONTRADICT: say the opposite thing.

CONTRARY: opposite, the other side.

CONTRAST: put two things together to show differences.

CONTRIBUTE: help towards.

CONTRIVE: arrange, usually with some difficulty.

CONVENT: religious house for women.

CONVERSE: talk.

CONVEY: take from one place to another.

CONVINCE: persuade.

CORD: thin rope.

CORPSE: dead body.

COTTAGE: small house in the country.

COUCH: article of furniture with seat long enough to take the legs at full stretch.

COUNTER: small, flat, round object used to count winnings and losses playing cards.

COUNTENANCE: face.

COUNTLESS: too many to count.

COUPLE n.: two.

COUPLE v.: join together.

COURT v.: make love to s., preparing for marriage.

COURTSHIP: making love, preparing for marriage.

COWER: draw back in fear.

CRAWL: go on hands and knees like a baby, go very slowly like an insect.

CREATION: 1. act of making. 2. all things made by God. 3. something wonderful made by man.

CREDITOR: man to whom money is owed.

CRIPPLE: one without full use of all his limbs.

CRIPPLED: without full use of all limbs.

CROOKED: 1. twisted, not straight. 2. dishonest.

CROOKEDNESS: 1. being twisted. 2. dishonesty.

CROSS: angry.

CROUCH: bend the body low.

CRUTCHES: special sticks to help one without use of leg to walk.

CUFF: blow with open hand usually on head.

CUNNING: clever in a bad, tricky way.

CURTSEY: kind of bow made by women as greeting.

CUSTODY: safe-keeping (often in hands of police).

CUSTOMARY: usual.

CUT v.: to cut somebody: to pretend not to see him, refuse to speak to him.

D

DAMN: swear word meaning God send to hell.

DART v.: move as quickly as an arrow.

DAWN: sunrise

DAZE v.: make s. partly lose power of thought as with blow on head, wine, etc.

DAZZLE v.: shine too brightly for the eye to see clearly.

DEADEN: to make more nearly dead, e.g. noise, feelings.

DEAL: give out one by one, e.g. blows, cards.

DECAY: way in which e.g. flesh goes bad.

DECENTLY: politely, quietly.

DECORATED: ornamented.

DECORATION: ornament.

DEFINITE: certain, clear, decided.

DEFY: refuse to obey.

DEGRADED: brought low in opinion of self or others.

DEJECTED: unhappy.

DELIBERATE: slow, careful.

DELIBERATELY: purposely.

DELIBERATION: 1. slowness. 2. thought.

DELICACY: 1. graceful beauty. 2. weakness esp. likeliness of catching disease. 3. thought for feelings of others. 4. choice kind of food.

DELICIOUS: delightful esp. to taste.

DEN: home of animal.

- DENIAL: 1. refusing s. asked. 2. saying s. is not true.
 DENY: 1. refuse request. 2. say s. is not true.
 DEPART: go away.
 DEPARTURE: going away.
 DEPOSIT v., n.: put s. down esp. sum of money, thing put down.
 DEPRESSION: 1. little hole. 2. feeling of sadness.
 DESCEND: go down.
 DESCENT: 1. going down. 2. high descent: good birth.
 DESERT v.: go away and leave.
 DESIGN: plan. pattern.
 DESIRABLE: to be wished for.
 DESIROUS: wanting s.
 DESOLATE: bare, empty, deserted, comfortless.
 DESPATCH: send off.
 DESPERATE: hopeless.
 DESPISE: think of as worthless.
 DESPITE: in spite of.
 DESTINED: fated.
 DETAIN: keep back.
 DETECT: discover.
 DETEST: hate.
 DEVOTE: give s. up to some cause or purpose, give oneself up in same way.
 DEVOTION: 1. love. 2. prayers.
 DIALOGUE: speech between two people (sometimes more).
 DICTATED: written or done according to the orders of somebody else.
 DIGNIFIED: appearing worthy of respect.
 DIGNITY: way of behaving, looking, etc., that others respect.
 DIGRESSION: going off the point.
 DIM v., adj.: 1. to make less bright. 2. dull, faint.
 DIMLY: faintly.
 DISAGREEABLE: unpleasant.
 DISASTER: seriously unpleasant event.
 DISCLOSE v.: to let e.g. a secret out.
 DISCOLOURED: spoil the colour of, give a bad colour to.
 DISCORD: 1. failure to go well together esp. notes of music. 2. disagreement.
 DISHONOURABLE: opposite of honourable.
 DISLIKE v.: opposite of like.
 DISMAL: unhappy, miserable, comfortless.
 DISMAY: fear.
 DISMOUNT: get down (from animal or cart).
 DISPENSE WITH: do without.
 DISPIRITED: in low spirits, unhappy.
 DISPLAY v., n.: show.
 DISPOSE OF: get rid of.
 DISPOSED: well-disposed: ready to be good or kind.
 DISPUTE: argument, disagreement.
 DISREGARD: ignore, take no notice of.
 DISTINCT: 1. clear, plain. 2. different.
 DISTINCTION: 1. difference. 2. honour.
 DISTRESS: sorrow, pain, suffering.
 DOCUMENT: a piece of paper of some importance.

- DOMESTIC: belonging to the home.
 DORMITORY: bedroom for several people in school or religious house.
 DRAIN v.: 1. take away water from e.g. fields. 2. drink to the last drop.
 3. take anything away drop by drop.
 DRAMATICALLY: as if in a play, as exciting as this.
 DRAT: polite and meaningless swear word.
 DRAWLING: slow spoken, with words drawn out long.
 DREADFUL: 1. originally causing great fear. 2. now usually much weaker, meaning bad.
 DREARY: dull and miserable.
 DROOP: 1. hang head like unwatered flower. 2. hang down as if weak.
 3. be in low spirits.
 DRUDGE: one who does hard, unpleasant, unskilled work.
 DRUDGERY: hard work in which there is no pleasure.
 DUTIFULLY: according to duty.
 DUMB: 1. unable to speak. 2. unspeaking.
 DWARF: person smaller than normal size.
 DWELL: 1. live. 2. dwell on s.: keep on thinking or talking about it.
 DWELLING: house.

E

- ECHO n.: 1. reflected sound. 2. mere repetition.
 ECONOMICAL: 1. using as little money as possible. 2. using little of other valuable things.
 ECONOMY: 1. using valuable things to best advantage. 2. system of trade and payments.
 EFFECT: (to that effect) doing or saying that.
 EFFECTIVELY: successfully.
 ELBOW n., v.: 1. part of body at joint of upper and lower arm. 2. to push with the elbows.
 EMBARRASS: make s. feel uncomfortable.
 EMBARRASSMENT: 1. feeling of discomfort. 2. thing that causes the feeling.
 EMBRACE: 1. put arms round in love. 2. include.
 EMBROIDER: make patterns on plain cloth with needle and coloured thread.
 EMBROIDERY: art or result of making above patterns.
 EMERGE: come out gradually.
 EMOTION: feeling.
 EMPHASIS: 1. special force with which word is said. 2. weight given to some part of s.
 EMPHASIZE: speak strongly.
 ENABLE: make able.
 ENCOUNTER: meet.
 ENDEARMENT: word showing love.
 ENDEAVOUR: try.
 ENDURANCE: power of bearing suffering, continuing in spite of difficulties.
 ENDURE: put up with, bear.
 ENERGY: force, power to work hard.
 ENGAGED: 1. busy doing. 2. busy, not free. 3. promised in marriage.

ENGAGEMENT: promise, esp. in marriage.
 ENLIGHTEN: inform, make wiser.
 ENLIGHTENED: well-informed, wise, free from wrong beliefs.
 ENORMOUS: very large.
 ENRICH: make rich.
 ENTHUSIASM: eagerness.
 ENTHUSIASTIC: full of eagerness and hope.
 ENVIOUS: full of hate for someone because he is lucky.
 ERRAND: message, something to run and do.
 ERROR: mistake.
 ESQUIRE: title of respect.
 ESTABLISH: set up, build, make firm.
 ESTABLISHMENT: building, something established.
 ESTATE: land a man owns, money owned at death.
 ETERNAL: everlasting, undying.
 ETERNITY: time without beginning or end.
 EVENTS: at all events: whatever happens.
 EVIDENT(LY): clear, easily seen, certain.
 EXCEEDINGLY: very much.
 EXCLAIM: say in a surprised or loud voice.
 EXCLAMATION: something said in a surprised voice.
 EXCLUSIVE: shutting out others from taking part.
 EXCURSION: short journey.
 EXECUTED: carried out, done.
 EXECUTION: carrying out, workmanship.
 EXHAUSTED: 1. used up. 2. tired out.
 EXHIBIT: show.
 EXPEDITION: journey, often with some danger or difficulty.
 EXPOSE someone to something: allow something unpleasant to happen to them.
 EXPOSURE: putting in a position of danger, letting out a secret.
 EXQUISITE: of a delicate beauty.
 EXTEND: stretch.
 EXTRAVAGANCE: spending money foolishly, wasting valuable things.

F

FABLE: old story, untrue story.
 FAIR: 1. just. 2. with light-coloured hair and skin. 3. beautiful.
 FAILING n.: weakness, fault.
 FAITHLESS: without faith, untrustworthy.
 FALTER: begin to fail, hesitate, speak in a broken voice.
 FAME: great name, condition of being famous.
 FANTASTIC: 1. as strange as the fancy can imagine. 2. unreasonable.
 FARE: money paid for the right to travel in public means of transport.
 FAREWELL: good-bye.
 FAVOURITE: most loved, best liked.
 FEATURE: 1. part of face. 2. special outstanding point.
 FEEBLE: weak.
 FEEBLY: weakly.
 FEMININE: female, proper to a woman, referring to a female.
 FENDER: iron or brass guard put in front of the fire.

- FIDDLESTICKS**: most unusual expression meaning nonsense.
- FIGURE OF SPEECH**: use of words in more than a straightforward way, expressing meaning by kind of comparison, e.g. as quiet as a *mouse*. He *burned* with anger.
- FIGURATIVE**: of words used in the above way.
- FILE**: a line.
- FILTHY**: dirty and disgusting.
- FINAL**: coming at the end, bringing to an end, finishing.
- FIREWORKS**: toys that when lit throw out sparks, explode, or shoot up into the air, used for celebrations.
- FIST**: the closed hand.
- FIT**: short-lived but strong feeling.
- FITTING**: suitable, proper.
- FIXEDLY**: as if fixed, without moving.
- FLASK**: bottle made to fit the pocket.
- FLATTER**: say about s. pleasant things he does not deserve, make s. appear better than he (or, of course, she) is.
- FLATTERY**: things said or done to flatter.
- FLEE (FLED)**: run away.
- FLIGHT (of steps)**: group of steps without a break.
- FLING v.**: throw.
- FLIRT n.**: one who sets out to make a number of people fall in love with her (or him).
- FLIRTATIOUS**: having the qualities of a flirt.
- FLOG**: beat severely as a punishment.
- FLOURISH n.**: music such as introduces a king or calls soldiers to battle.
- FLOURISH v.**: grow well, do well, be at best.
- FLUSH v.**: go red with e.g. shame, anger.
- FLUTE**: musical instrument made of a pipe with holes in.
- FOLLY**: foolishness.
- FOREFATHER**: one from whom one's father or mother is descended.
- FOREGONE**: 1. gone before. 2. done without.
- FOREHEAD**: part of face between eyes and hair.
- FORESHADOW**: suggest s. before it happens.
- FORESHORTENED**: shown in a drawing as short because the lines run towards the artist's eye.
- FORESIGHT**: power to look and plan ahead, to see what is coming.
- FORETELL**: tell before it happens.
- FOREWARN**: warn before the event.
- FORM**: 1. long seat without back for several boys in a school. 2. class in school.
- FORTH**: out.
- FORTIFICATION**: the science of building strong places to keep off attacks.
- FORWARD v.**: send on.
- FOUL**: unclean, disgusting, unfair.
- FOUNDLING**: child left by its mother and found in the street.
- FOUNTAIN**: water thrown into the air from a pipe, place built for this.
- FRAGMENT**: piece of s.
- FRAME OF MIND**: temper.
- FRANK(LY)**: open, saying what one thinks.

- FRIAR: member of religious order of men who promised to live in poverty and go about caring for sick and teaching religion.
 FRO (only in TO AND FRO): backwards and forwards.
 FROCK: dress.
 FROWN v.: look angry or puzzled.
 FULFIL: carry out as promised.
 FULFILMENT: completion.
 FUMES: smoke, gas given off something usually with strong smell.
 FURIOUS(LY): very angry.
 FUSSY: likely to make a lot of trouble about unimportant things.

G

- GALLANT(LY): brave, attractive to women.
 GALLANTRY: politeness to women.
 GALLERY: cheap seats in theatre, high above the stage.
 GALLOP v.: run like a horse at its fastest.
 GARMENT: any article of clothing.
 GASP v., n.: 1. open mouth as if short of air. 2. open mouth in astonishment. 3. act of opening mouth. 4. noise made by so doing.
 GAZE v., n.: 1. look steadily at. 2. long, fixed look.
 GENERATION: 1. length of time (about thirty years) in which a man may grow up and have children. 2. the people of about the same age.
 GENIUS: spirit, good or evil.
 GEOMETRY: study of relations of lines, planes and solids and of their properties.
 GESTURE: movement of hand or body.
 GHOST: spirit of a dead man returned to earth.
 GIANT: being above the normal size.
 GIGANTIC: very large.
 GIGGLE v., n.: laugh like a silly girl.
 GLANCE v., n.: look at for a short time, or without much attention.
 GLARE n., v.: 1. shine too brightly. 2. look fiercely.
 GLEAM n., v.: shine with reflected light.
 GLIDE: move along smoothly.
 GLITTER: shine with broken points of light.
 GLOBE: map of world on a large ball for teaching.
 GLOOM (gloomy, adj.; gloomily): darkness, sorrow, misery.
 GLOVE: covering worn on hands for warmth.
 GLOW: shine with steady red light.
 GO (here's a go): there's something strange here.
 GOAL: thing to aim at.
 GOOD-HUMOURED: always in a good temper.
 GOOSE: 1. large water bird. 2. someone silly.
 GOWN: dress.
 GRACIOUS(LY): kind and pleasant.
 GRACIOUS: lady-like swear word.
 GRASP v., n.: 1. take hold of firmly. 2. understand.
 GRAVE: important, serious, weighty.
 GRIEF: sorrow.
 GRIEVE: be sorrowful.

GRIM: hard, unpleasant.

GRIN n., v.: smile, pleasant or unpleasant.

GRIP v., n.: take hold of firmly.

GROAN n., v.: sound made by man in pain, make such a sound.

GROWL v.: make a noise like an angry dog, speak in a tone of voice like this.

GRUNT v., n.: make a noise like a pig.

GUINEA: twenty-one shillings.

GUST: short, strong blowing of wind.

H

HAIL: little pieces of ice that fall like rain.

HALT: stop.

HANDSOME: good looking.

HANDWRITING: making letters with a pen.

HANDY: useful, convenient, easy to find or use.

HARD BY: near, next to.

HARMONY: 1. agreement. 2. music.

HARNESS: leather tying horse to cart, keeping saddle on, etc.

HARP: large musical instrument with many strings played by touching strings with fingers.

HARSH: hard, cruel.

HASTEN: hurry, make haste.

HEADLONG: in great haste.

HEARTH: part of floor where fire is.

HEARTY (heartily): from the heart, strong, large, healthy, good-humoured.

HEEL: back part of foot.

HEIR: man coming into money on death of father, etc.

HELL: place of never-ending punishment.

HENCE: from here, from this.

HERO: 1. brave man. 2. chief character in book.

HICCUP: noise like a little cough caused by laughing too much or eating too fast.

HILT: handle of a sword.

HINT v.: suggest without saying plainly.

HOARSE: of voice, thick, without clear sound.

HOBBY: activity carried out for amusement.

HONEYMOON: first week or so of married life.

HOOT n.: a loud sound.

HORN: 1. hard pointed growth on head of cow, etc. 2. musical instrument made from this.

HORNY: of hands, hardened by work.

HORRIBLE (horribly): very unpleasant.

HORRID: very unpleasant.

HORROR: strong fear, disgust.

HOST: large number.

HOUND: hunting dog.

HOVER: 1. keep in the air, like some birds, in one place only making very small movement of wings. 2. hang over one's head.

HOWL v., n.: cry of pain, like a dog in the night.

HUDDLE v.: get together in a close group.
 HUG: put arms tightly round.
 HUGE: very large.
 HUM n.: continuous low noise.
 HUMANE: kindly, merciful.
 HUMBUG: deceit, nonsense.
 HUMILITY: being humble, modesty.
 HUMOUR: 1. state of temper. 2. sympathetic laughter.

I.

IDENTIFY: find out what s. is, pick out the right one from others.
 IDENTITY: who s. is.
 IGNORANCE: being without knowledge.
 IGNORANT: without knowledge.
 ILL-HUMOUR: bad temper.
 IMAGE: a reflection in e.g. mirror, mind.
 IMPART: give to.
 IMPARTIAL: neither giving advantage to one side nor the other.
 IMPLORINGLY: in a way asking for pity, begging.
 IMPLY: suggest without saying plainly.
 IMPRESS: have or make a strong effect on.
 IMPRESSION: effect on mind.
 IMPRESSIVE: having a strong effect on mind or feelings.
 IMPROPER: rude, incorrect, unfit for ladies' ears.
 IMPRUDENCE: foolishness. lack of wise care.
 IMPUDENCE: rudeness esp. to s. more important than speaker.
 IMPULSE: sudden feeling urging towards some action.
 INCAPABLE: not able to.
 INCLINE: 1. bend or be bent. 2. tend to.
 INCOME n.: money coming in regularly.
 INCONSIDERATE: not thinking of the feelings of others.
 INDEFINITE: not stated, not made clear.
 INDIFFERENCE: lack of interest.
 INDIGNANT: moved by mixed feeling of anger and innocence, angry
 and sure one has done nothing wrong.
 INDIGNATION: the above feeling.
 INDISPENSABLE: impossible to do without.
 INDIVIDUAL: one thought of as separate from others like him.
 INDUCE: persuade.
 INDULGE: 1. give way to wishes of. 2. enjoy freely.
 INEXHAUSTIBLE: impossible to use up.
 INFANCY: early childhood.
 INFANT: young child.
 INFANTILE: like a young child.
 INFECTION: disease that passes from one person to another.
 INFERIOR: not so good as.
 INFERIORITY: state of being not so good as something else.
 INFLICT: give s. something he does not want.
 INFLECTION: thing inflicted.
 INFREQUENTLY: not commonly, rarely.
 INFURIATED: very angry indeed.

INHERIT: get when s. dies.

INHUMAN: without mercy, without human kindness.

INJURY: harm, wound.

INNOCENCE: 1. state of having done no wrong. 2. state of not knowing difference between good and evil.

INNOCENT: 1. having done no wrong. 2. knowing nothing of good or evil.

INSENSIBLE: without strong feelings.

INSEPARABLE: impossible to divide.

INSERT: put in.

INSIST: be determined to have one's own way.

INSPECT: look at carefully.

INSPECTION: careful examination.

INSPIRE: 1. give someone strength, ideas, words from some source outside himself. 2. encourage.

INSTANCE: example.

INSTINCT: feeling leading to action without thought.

INSTRUCT: tell, teach.

INSTRUCTIONS: orders, directions.

INTELLIGENCE: 1. news, information. 2. brains, sense.

INTELLIGENT: clever, having plenty of brain power.

INTENSE(LY): very strong.

INTENT(LY): with all the mind fixed on.

INTERNAL: to do with the inside.

INTERPRET: translate in order to make understood.

INTERVAL: space, time between two happenings.

INTERVIEW: meeting.

INTIMATE: of close friends, special and personal e.g. knowledge.

INTRUST (entrust): give somebody something to take care of.

INVADE: make way (e.g. into another country) by force of arms.

INVALUABLE: of the highest value, more valuable than can be measured.

INVEST: put money into s. in hope of profit.

INVISIBLE: impossible to see, out of sight.

INVOLUNTARILY: not purposely, without wishing to.

IRREPRESSIBLE: impossible to keep in or down.

IRRITABLY: in a bad-tempered way.

IRRITATE (irritation n.): 1. to be painful, troublesome in a small way like the bite of insect. 2. to make angry.

IVORY: material got from great teeth of elephants.

J

JACKET: short coat

JAIL (gaol): prison.

JERK n., v.: (give) a short sharp pull, make sudden little movement.

JOLLY: cheerful, happy.

JUG: vessel used to hold e.g. milk, beer.

JUNIOR: younger.

K

- KEEN(LY) (keenness n.): 1. sharp. 2. eager. 3. strong (of desire, interest).
 KENNEL: dog's house.
 KETTLE: used to boil water in kitchen.
 KNIGHT: man of noble birth, or one given equal rank as reward for services.
 KNOCKER: movable piece of metal used to make noise on door.

L

- LABOUR v.: 1. work hard. 2. labour under error: be deceived, be wrong.
 LACE n.: gold lace: gold thread twisted to ornament e.g. military coats, hats.
 LAD: boy.
 LAMB: young sheep.
 LAME: without full use of legs.
 LANDING: flat part at top of stairs in house.
 LANDLORD: 1. owner of property. 2. owner of inn.
 LANTERN: lamp for use out of doors.
 LAPSE: 1. small mistake. 2. a falling down.
 LARK: singing bird.
 LASH v., n.: 1. beat with a whip. 2. a whip. 3. a blow from a whip.
 LATCH: catch on door allowing it to be opened from either side.
 LATIN: language of ancient Rome.
 LAUNCH: 1. put ship in water. 2. start something.
 LEADEN: as heavy as lead.
 LEAN (leanness n.): thin.
 LEAVE: permission.
 LEAVE-TAKING: saying good-bye.
 LEGEND: old story.
 LEGGINGS: cloth or leather worn to protect legs.
 LEISURE: free time.
 LEMON: fruit like an orange but sourer.
 LEST: for fear that, so that . . . not.
 LIBERAL: 1. liberal education: one fit for a gentleman, i.e. general, not to a trade. 2. generous. 3. plentiful. 4. open-minded.
 LIKENED: compared to.
 LIKEWISE: in the same way, also.
 LILY: flower, usually white (represents purity).
 LIMP n., v., adj.: 1. imperfect walk. 2. walk without full use of legs. 3. not stiff.
 LINEN: articles of clothing and household use made of cotton or flax.
 LINGER: wait, often because unwilling to go.
 LINK n.: unit in a chain, thing joining other things.
 LION: large wild animal of cat family, male has long hair on neck and chest.
 LITERAL: of words, used in most straightforward way, opp. of *figurative*.
 LIVER: organ inside body.

LOCK OF HAIR: number of hairs hanging together.

LONESOME: lonely.

LOT: fate.

LOUNGE v.: sit or stand in a loose, lazy way.

LOVE: for love: for nothing, without payment.

LOWLY: humble.

LUGGAGE: boxes, cases, etc., taken on a journey.

LUXURY: 1. anything more than a necessity. 2. something enjoyable.
3. being surrounded by more than enough of everything.

M

MA'AM (madam): used to address women as "sir" to men.

MAGNIFY: make s. seem larger.

MAIDEN: unmarried girl.

MAID-SERVANT: servant girl (now old-fashioned).

MAJESTICALLY: like a king or queen.

MANUSCRIPT: original copy of something written.

MARTYR: one who makes sacrifices, sometimes dies, for beliefs.

MARVEL: something wonderful.

MARVELLOUS: wonderful.

MASTERPIECE: fine example of work of master.

MATHEMATICS: science of space and number.

MATHEMATICAL: to do with mathematics.

MATTRESS: long flat bag filled with e.g. hair, cotton, used to sleep on.

MEAN adj. (meanness n.): 1. opposite of generous. 2. small-minded.
3. over-careful with money.

MEASURED: of voice, slow and thoughtful.

MELANCHOLY: sad.

MEMORIAL: thing in memory of someone or s.

MENTAL(LY): to do with the mind.

METROPOLITAN: of a *metropolis* or capital city.

MIDST: middle.

MIGHTY: 1. strong, great. 2. very.

MINGLE: mix

MINIATURE: 1. adj. very small. 2. n. little picture.

MINX: girl full of tricks.

MIRACLE: 1. happening that breaks the laws of nature. 2. anything
wonderful.

MIRTH: laughter.

MISCELLANEOUS: mixed, not divided into classes.

MISSIONARY: one who goes out to teach religion to unbelievers.

MIST: cloud on ground level.

MISTRESS: woman in position of master, or master's wife.

MOAN v.: make a noise as if in pain.

MOAT: circle of water round building as defence against attack.

MOB: crowd of people usually acting on feelings rather than sense.

MOIST: damp.

MOISTEN: make damp.

MOISTURE: dampness.

MOMENT: of moment: important.

MONK: member of religious brotherhood.

- MONOPOLY**: to give s. a monopoly of something: not to allow anyone to compete with him, let him be the only person dealing with it.
MONOTONOUS: same, tiringly repeated without variety.
MONOTONY: sameness, lack of variety.
MOOD: state of mind.
MOODILY: not in a very good state of mind.
MORALS: behaviour according to ideas of what is right and wrong.
MORSEL: small piece.
MORTAL: 1. that which will die as opposed to that which lives for ever. 2. a man. 3. of disease, etc., causing death. 4. of insult, lasting till death.
MORTGAGE: agreement giving man who lends money right to take property, etc., if repayment is not made.
MOTION v.: make a sign to s. to do something.
MOTIVE: reason for behaviour.
MOUNT: get or put on to.
MOURNFUL: sad, unhappy.
MOUSTACHE: hair on upper lip.
MUDDLE n., v.: 1. mix things up, fail to keep things in order. 2. things so disordered.
MULTITUDINOUS: to do with a very large number, numerous, many.
MURMUR: 1. low sound. 2. speak in a quiet voice. 3. murmur against: complain.
MUSCULAR: 1. to do with the muscles, those parts of the body that make us move. 2. strong.
MUTTER: speak quietly or not very clearly.

N

- NAP**: short sleep.
NASTY: unpleasant.
NAVAL: to do with ships or sailors.
NAY: no (now old-fashioned).
NECKERCHIEF: cloth round the neck (now old-fashioned).
NERVOUS: easily frightened.
NEVERTHELESS: in spite of this.
NOD v., n.: make sign with head, greeting or agreement.
NOTION: idea.
NOVELTY: 1. newness. 2. new thing.
NUN: woman member of religious house.
NURSERY: room for young children.

O

- OBJECT**: aim, purpose.
OBLIGED: 1. grateful. 2. forced.
OBSERVE: say, remark.
OBSTACLE: thing in one's way causing difficulty.
OBSTINACY n.: foolish determination.
OBSTINATE: wrongly determined to have one's own way.
OBTAIN: get.
OBVIOUS: plain, clear, easy to see.
OCCASION: cause.

OCCUPATION: kind of work.

OCCUPY: 1. fill time, place. 2. occupy oneself doing: spend one's time doing.

OCCUR: 1. happen. 2. come into one's head.

ODD: 1. strange, unusual. 2. left over, remaining. 3. opposite of even.

ODDS: number of chances; the odds are even: it's as likely as not; odds on: more likely than not; odds against: less likely than not.

OPERA: stage show combining acting and serious singing.

OPPONENT: someone working, playing or fighting on the other side.

ORCHARD: garden of fruit trees.

ORDEAL: severe test.

ORPHAN: child having no father or mother.

OUTBREAK: a bursting out, usually of s. unpleasant.

OUTCAST: somebody kept out of his group.

OUTDO: do better than.

OUTLET: way out, place where something can get out.

OUTRIGHT: openly, fully.

OUTSTANDING: 1. noticeably better. 2. of bills, unpaid.

OVERWHELM: overcome by being too much or too big.

P

PACE n., v.: step.

PALM: inside of hand.

PAPA: child's form of father (now old-fashioned).

PARISH: area served by one church.

PARLOUR: sitting-room.

PART AND PARCEL OF: impossible to separate from.

PARTITION: 1. division. 2. division inside a room not permanent or high enough to call a wall.

PARTNER: 1. someone who has an equal share with one in business, game, etc.

PASS: to come to a pretty pass: to be in a bad way.

PASSION: strong feeling of love, hate or pain.

PASSIONATE(LY): with strong feeling.

PASTIME: amusement that helps to pass the time.

PAT n., v.: light, friendly touch on head, shoulder, etc.

PATCH v.: mend a hole by sewing on another piece of cloth.

PATRIOTIC: having a love of or serving one's native country.

PAVEMENT: raised walk at side of road.

PEACOCK: bird with very beautiful feathers, representing pride.

PEASANT: country labourer.

PEEP: take a short look.

PENALTY: punishment.

PERCEIVE: see, hear or understand.

PERCEPTIBLE: possible to perceive.

PERCEPTION: seeing, hearing or understanding.

PERCH v.: sit on something high, like a bird in a tree.

PERIL: danger.

PERIOD: space of time.

PERPENDICULAR: upright, at right angle to ground.

PERPLEXED (perplexity n.): puzzled.

- PETITION n., v.: 1. written request from s. to authorities. 2. to send such a request.
- PHILOSOPHER (philosophical adj.): 1. student of wisdom. 2. one who accepts things as they are.
- PHILOSOPHY: 1. study of wisdom. 2. ideas thought out as result of that study.
- PHRASE n., v.: 1. group of words that go together but do not make sentence. 2. put into words or phrases.
- PIANO: musical instrument played by hitting black and white keys.
- PICTURESQUE: pretty, i.e. would make a good picture.
- PIE: covered-in dish of fruit or meat.
- PIERCE: make a hole through.
- PIETY: deep feeling of respect for religion or family.
- PILGRIMAGE: special journey to a holy place.
- PILLOW n., v.: cloth bag filled with feathers on which to rest head when sleeping.
- PITIFUL: causing pity in onlooker.
- PLATFORM: stage for speaker, etc.
- PLEAD: beg, pray.
- PLUNGE: 1. dive. 2. of horses, jump up and down dangerously. 3. make a sudden start on s.
- POKE: stick something pointed into.
- POLICY: general idea underlying details of a plan.
- POND: pool of water.
- PONY: small horse.
- PORRIDGE: soft special food.
- PORTER: man whose work is to carry things.
- PORTION: part.
- PORTRAIT: picture of s.
- POSITIVELY: certainly, decidedly.
- PRAISEWORTHY: deserving praise.
- PRAY: please e.g. Pray sit down (old-fashioned).
- PRECEDE: go before.
- PRECISELY: exactly.
- PRESENT v.: 1. give. 2. present oneself: appear, come.
- PRESENTLY: in a short time, soon.
- PRESIDE: be in charge of, act as president.
- PRESUME: suppose, take as certain.
- PRETTY: pretty good: fairly good, rather good.
- PREVAIL: 1. succeed. 2. be common.
- PREVIOUS(LY): coming, mentioned before.
- PRIME: best.
- PRIMITIVE: as things were in very ancient days.
- PRINCIPAL: 1. chief, most important. 2. sum of money on which interest is paid.
- PRINCIPLE: guiding general idea.
- PROCEED: go on.
- PROCEEDINGS: things happening.
- PROCESS: continuous number of connected happenings.
- PROCLAIM: say openly, loudly or in public.
- PRODUCE: things produced esp. on a farm.
- PROFOUND: deep.
- PROMINENT: well known, sticking out from the flat.

PROMPT: suggest.

PROPHECY: 1. statement saying what will happen in future. 2. power of making such statements.

PROPORTION: relation between e.g. height and weight.

PROSPECT: what one can see in front of one.

PROTEST: 1. object. 2. say.

PROVIDENCE: God.

PRUDENCE: wisdom, proper care.

PRUDENT: wise, careful.

PUBLIC-HOUSE: inn.

PUFF: blow the breath out, breathe quickly

PUNCH v.: strike with closed hand.

PUNCH: hot, strong drink.

PUPPY: young dog.

PURCHASE: buy.

PURIFY: make pure.

PURSE: little leather holder for money.

PURSUE: follow, run after, keep on about.

PURSUIT: 1. running after, following, etc. 2. kind of work.

Q

QUADRUPED: animal with four legs.

QUEER: strange.

QUERY: question.

QUEST: search.

QUIET v.: make quiet.

R

RAFTER: beam in roof.

RAG: torn piece of cloth.

RAGGED: with torn clothes, like the edge of a torn piece of cloth.

RAGE n., v.: great anger.

RANGE: distance a thing can reach or over which it goes.

RAP n., v.: sharp blow.

RAPID: quick.

RAPIDITY: quickness.

RASCAL: bad, worthless man.

RASCALITY: wickedness.

RATTLE: make a noise like bits of wood or metal striking together.

REAR: back part.

REASSURE: comfort, make calm, remove fear.

REBEL v.: disobey authority.

REBEL n.: one who refuses to obey.

REBELLION: 1. war against government. 2. general refusal to obey authority.

REBUKE: speak words of blame.

RECKON: 1. count, count on. 2. ready-reckoner: book with tables saving the need to count.

RECLAIM: 1. get s. out of bad ways. 2. get back s.

RECOLLECT: remember.

- RECOLLECTION: memory.
RECORD v.: make note of, put down in writing.
RECOUNT: tell the story of.
RECOVER: get back money, health
RECOVERY: getting back s., getting better.
REDDISH: somewhat red.
REFLECT: think.
REFLECTION: thought.
REFORM v.: improve, make better.
REFRAIN: hold oneself back, not do s.
REGAIN: get back.
REGARD: 1. look at. 2. respect.
REGION: area, part of the world.
REIN n.: leather rope by which horse is guided.
REIN IN: stop by using the reins.
REJECT: refuse, throw out.
RELATE: tell.
RELATIVE: relation.
RELATIVE TO: connected with.
RELAX: make or take things easier, freer, not so strict.
RELEASE: let go of, let out.
RELY: depend.
REMAINDER: that which remains, the rest.
REMNANT: the part left, the remainder.
REMOTE: distant.
REMOVE: take away.
RENDER: make.
RENEWAL: act of making new again.
REPAY: pay back.
REPENT: be sorry for.
REPLACE: put back.
REPOSE: rest, sleep.
REPROACHFUL(LY): putting the blame on the other.
REPROOF: blame.
REPULSE: defeat an attack, push back (enemy).
REQUIRE: need, demand.
RESEMBLANCE: likeness.
RESERVE: that which causes people to hide their thoughts and feelings,
to keep themselves to themselves.
RESIDENT: person living in a place.
RESOLVE: 1. decide. 2. resolve itself into: turn out to be.
RESOLUTION: decision.
RESOURCES: things, money, rooms, etc., available for use.
RESPECTABLE: worthy of respect.
RESPECTABILITY: quality of deserving respect.
RESPECTIVELY: one to one and one to the other in the order named.
RESPONSE: answer by word or action.
RESTORE: give back.
RESUME: start again.
RETAIN: keep.
RETIRE: go back, leave company, go to bed.
RETIREMENT: peace and quiet.
RETORT: answer.

- RETREAT v., n.: go back, be forced back.
 REVEAL: show, tell a secret.
 RIB: bone joined to backbone enclosing chest.
 RIDICULOUS: laughable.
 RIOT: behaviour of lawless crowd, behaviour loud and noisy like this.
 ROAM: walk about aimlessly.
 ROMAN NOSE: nose with a slight wave in it.
 ROSE: flower, usually red.
 ROUGH IT: put up with hardships.
 ROUSE: wake up.
 RUFFIAN(LY): rough, coarse, violent man.
 RUMBLE: make a noise like distant thunder.
 RUMOUR: general talk, sometimes wrong.
 RURAL: of the country as opposed to the town.

S

- SALUTE: greet.
 SALUTATION: greeting.
 SANDWICH: two pieces of bread and butter placed round e.g. cheese, egg, etc.
 SARCASTIC: saying opposite of what you mean, intending to hurt feelings of hearer, e.g. to a stupid boy, "You *are* a clever fellow."
 SASH: wide belt of cloth
 SAVAGE(LY): wild and fierce.
 SCANTY (scantly): few, less than enough.
 SCARE: frighten.
 SCARECROW: figure placed in field to frighten birds.
 SCARF: garment worn round the neck.
 SCARLET: bright red (colour of poppies).
 SCENT v.: give out a smell.
 SCHOLAR: student.
 SCOUNDREL: man who is not honest, bad man.
 SCOUR v.: clean by rubbing hard.
 SCOWL: ugly frown.
 SCREAM: make a loud high noise in pain, anger or laughter.
 SEAL: 1. special mark pressed into wax to show that paper, etc., is in order. 2. put a seal on. 3. shut so that it cannot be opened without anyone knowing.
 SECURE: obtain.
 SECURELY: safely.
 SECURITY: 1. safety. 2. property given to lender in case loan is not repaid.
 SEEK: look for, try to obtain.
 SELF-DENIAL: sacrificing things for others, going without things.
 SEMI-CIRCLE: half circle.
 SENSITIVE: with strong feelings, easily hurt.
 SERIES: group of connected things or actions.
 SEX: being male or female.
 SHADING: way of showing dark place on picture.
 SHAKE-DOWN: some very rough possibly uncomfortable place to sleep.
 SHAWL: square of wool or cloth.
 SHED v.: let fall esp. leaves, tears, light.

- SHEER: complete, nothing but.
- SHIFT: to make shift with s.: to manage with it although not very suitable.
- SHINY: with a bright surface.
- SHIVER v.: shake with cold.
- SHRIEK n., v.: 1. a loud, high cry of pain, anger, etc. 2. to make such a cry.
- SHRILL: of noise, sharp and high.
- SHRINK: 1. slowly become smaller or less. 2. draw back in fear, pain, etc.
- SHRUNKEN adj.: having become less.
- SHRUG: raise shoulders as sign of feeling.
- SHUDDER: little shaking movement caused by fear, disgust.
- SHUFFLE: walk without lifting the feet properly.
- SHUTTER: wooden cover for window.
- SICKEN: to make feel ill, to become ill.
- SIDLE: move sideways.
- SIGH: a deep breath, sign of sadness.
- SIGNIFICANCE: meaning.
- SIGNIFICANTLY: with meaning.
- SILLY: foolish.
- SIMILAR: like, of same kind.
- SIMULTANEOUSLY: at the same time.
- SIN: wrong-doing.
- SINGLE: one, unmarried.
- SINGULAR(LY): strange.
- SITUATED: placed.
- SKELETON: 1. all the bones of body. 2. frame of something, outline.
- SKETCH n., v.: rough drawing, make a rough drawing.
- SKIN v.: take the skin off.
- SLAP: hit with open hand.
- SLAUGHTER v.: kill.
- SLEEVE: part of dress that covers arm.
- SLICE: n., v.: 1. flat piece cut off esp. bread, cake, meat. 2. cut off
- SLIGHT: 1. thin. 2. small, unimportant.
- SLOVENLY: dirty and careless.
- SLUMBER: sleep.
- SLY(LY): secret, tricky, not open.
- SMACK v.: 1. hit with open hand. 2. make noise with lips suggesting liking for food.
- SMART adj.: 1. of a blow, hard, sharp, painful. 2. of speed, quick.
- SMART v.: give pain.
- SNAP v.: 1. break with a sharp little noise. 2. break suddenly. 3. take a quick bite at. 4. speak very sharply to.
- SNAPPISHLY: of speech, sharp and ill-tempered.
- SNATCH: seize and pull at.
- SNEAK v.: 1. move secretly. 2. steal. 3. tell about.
- SNEER: smile unkindly, wound with cruel words.
- SNEEZE: sudden loud sound made in nose.
- SNIFF: take air in through nose noisily.
- SNOWDRIFT: place where snow is very deep.
- SNUB: of nose, turned up at end.
- SNUFF: tobacco powder.

- SOB n., v.: sudden intake of breath in middle of tears.
 SO-CALLED: wrongly given the name.
 SODA: water with gas in.
 SOLE n.: bottom part of foot or shoe.
 SOLE adj.: only.
 SOLITARY: alone.
 SOOTHE: comfort, make pain less.
 SOUND: healthy, reasonable, right.
 SOUNDLY: thoroughly.
 SOURCE: place of beginning.
 SPACIOUS: with plenty of space.
 SPARE v.: forgive, let go without punishment.
 SPARROW: common little bird.
 SPEAR: weapon with long wooden handle and steel head.
 SPECULATE: risk loss in hope of high profit.
 SPECULATION: action having such risk and hope.
 SPEEDILY: quickly.
 SPICE: 1. highly flavoured substances used to give food hotter or stronger taste. 2. thing giving interest to s.
 SPITE: feeling of wishing to give pain.
 SPITEFUL (spitefully): intending to hurt.
 SPLENDOUR: beauty of a great, shining kind.
 SPORT v.: play with, not to be serious about.
 SPRINKLING: a scattered few.
 SPUR: sharp iron worn on foot to make horse run.
 SQUEAK v.: make a high, thin, little noise.
 SQUEEZE: press from two sides.
 STABLE: building made for horses.
 STAGGER: walk with uncertain steps.
 STAINED: of glass, made of glass of different colours.
 STAMMER v.: hesitate in speech, be unable to speak straight on.
 STARE: look at steadily.
 START: give a little jump.
 STARTLE: frighten a little.
 STARVE: die from lack of food.
 STATELY: having an appearance of importance, deserving respect.
 STATION: rank, position in society.
 STATIONED: placed.
 STATUE: stone or metal model usually of famous person.
 STEAK: piece of meat.
 STERN: hard, strict, unsmiling, severe.
 STIFF: of drink, with a lot of strong drink in.
 STIFLE: 1. kill for lack of air. 2. stop by giving no outlet, encouragement.
 STIRRUP: horseman's iron footrest.
 STOCKBROKER: man whose business it is to buy and sell shares in undertakings.
 STOOL: seat with no back.
 STOOP: bend down.
 STOREY: all of house on one floor or level.
 STOUT: fat, brave.
 STRAIGHTFORWARD: honest and open, not tricky.
 STRAIGHTWAY: at once (now old-fashioned).

- STRAIN n., v.: 1. pull tight. 2. use all one's powers. 3. hurt oneself by too much work.
- STRAY adj.: lost, going about without anywhere to go.
- STRESS n.: weight given to part of word, or word in sentence.
- STRICKEN: from strike. overcome by trouble, sorrow.
- STRIDE v.: walk with big steps.
- STROLL v.: walk slowly for pleasure.
- STUCK UP: proud.
- STUFF: nonsense (old-fashioned).
- STUMBLE v.: 1. catch the foot and half fall. 2. stumble on: find by chance.
- STUN v.: strike s. so hard that he loses senses.
- STUNNING: severe enough to cause loss of senses.
- STUPEFY: make s. look slow and stupid.
- STYLE: way of doing things.
- SUBSIDE: go down, get less.
- SUBSTANTIAL: solid, considerable in quantity.
- SUBSTANTIVE: noun, name used in grammar for words that name things.
- SUCCESSION: in succession: one after another.
- SUFFERINGS: pain suffered.
- SUFFICIENT(LY): enough.
- SUICIDE: killing oneself.
- SUITOR: one who is asking a favour, especially that a lady should marry him.
- SULKY: in a bad temper, not taking part because angry.
- SULPHUR: unpleasant tasting medicine.
- SUM: amount of money.
- SUMMARY: shortened form of longer speech, etc.
- SUMMIT: highest point.
- SUMMON: call, tell to come.
- SUMMONS n.: call, order to come.
- SUMS: examples of figures to add, etc., in school.
- SUPERIOR: higher, better.
- SUPERIORITY: being higher or better.
- SUPPLE: bending easily.
- SUPPLENESS: being easily bent.
- SUPPRESS: keep down or back.
- SURPASSING: very great.
- SURVEY: look carefully at.
- SUSPEND: 1. hang up. 2. delay.
- SUSPENSE: state of wondering what will happen.
- SWAY v., n.: 1. move slowly from side to side. 2. rule over. 3. n. rule.
- SWEETHEART: lover.
- SWIFT(LY): quick.
- SYLLABLE: part of a word containing a vowel sound (the sound of a, e, i, o, u, etc.).
- SYMPTOM: sign esp. of disease.

T

- TALE: story.
- TASK: piece of work.

TAVERN: inn.

TEASE: 1. make fun of. 2. try to make angry.

TEENS: years between twelve and twenty.

TELESCOPE: instrument that makes far things seem near.

TEMPORARY: for a time only.

TENANT: man living in a house.

TERM: word.

TERMS: that which must be paid.

TERMS: on good (bad) terms with: have happy (unhappy) relations with.

TERROR: strong fear.

THAW: the melting of snow or ice.

THEORY: underlying ideas as opposed to practical.

THEREABOUTS: near there, about that.

THOUGHTLESSNESS: not thinking of the needs, etc., of others.

THRASHING: beating, number of blows with stick or whip.

THRONG: crowd.

THRUST v.: push.

THY: your (old-fashioned).

TIMBER: wood, considered for sale or use.

TIMID(LY): fearful, frightened.

TINY: very small.

TIP v., n.: 1. make thing slope. 2. end, point.

TIP-TOE v.: go on toes very quietly.

TIP-TOP: highest point, best.

TITLE: right.

TOAST: piece of bread made brown in front of fire.

TO-DO: unnecessary noise and trouble.

TOIL: work hard.

TOILET: getting dressed, way person is dressed.

TOMB: grave.

TONE: voice expressing feeling.

TOPIC: subject

TORMENT n., v.: sufferings, cause suffering.

TORTURE v.: make s. suffer pain.

TOSS v.: throw.

TOUCH: a touch of: a little of.

TRACE n., v.: 1. mark, sign. 2. small amount. 3. follow by signs.

TRAIN: 1. number of followers. 2. number of e.g. events, ideas, carriages, coming one after another.

TRANQUILLITY: peace and quiet.

TREACLE: sweet sticky liquid used for food.

TREAD: step.

TREAT v.: give as a favour esp. food, drink.

TRIFLE: unimportant little thing.

TRIFLING: 1. unimportant. 2. busy about unimportant things. 3. not treating serious things seriously.

TRIGONOMETRY: the study of relations between sides and angles of triangles.

TRIUMPH: 1. pleasure at success. 2. triumph over: win and be unkind to the loser.

TRIUMPHANT(LY): successful, victorious.

TROT: next speed of horse above walking.

TROUSERS: divided outer garments for legs.
 TRUNCHEON: short, thick, heavy stick esp. of police.
 TRUNK: travelling box for clothes, etc.
 TUCK v.: fold under, put away.
 TUMBLE v.: fall down.
 TUMBLEDOWN: falling down.
 TUMULT: noise and angry movement of a crowd.
 TUNNEL: long hole cut for some purpose, e.g. for a railway, mine, etc.
 TURBAN: long piece of cloth worn wound round the head.
 TURF: grass.
 TURN TO ACCOUNT: make use of.
 TWELVEMONTH: year.
 TWIN: one of two children born at same time.
 TWINKLE: shine like a star.
 TYRANT: one who uses his great power in a hard or cruel way.
 TYRANNY: rule of a tyrant.

U

UNACCOUNTABLE: impossible to explain.
 UNACQUAINTED: not knowing.
 UNBECOMING: not suitable, not right and proper.
 UNCEASING: not stopping.
 UNCONCERN: lack of worry.
 UNCULTIVATED: without polished manners.
 UNDERTAKE: agree to do, start to do.
 UNDERTAKING: 1. promise. 2. piece of work.
 UNDIGNIFIED: not worthy of respect.
 UNINTELLIGIBLE: impossible to understand.
 UNPARALLELED: without anything else like it.
 UNRECLAIMED: 1. not won back from crime, etc., not made good.
 2. not asked for again.
 UNVARYING: with no change, always the same.
 UPPERMOST: top.
 UPROAR: loud noise, violent wild behaviour by many people.
 UPSTART: someone rising to higher place in society than he should.
 URCHIN: boy usually poor, dirty, or troublesome.
 UTTER adj.: complete.
 UTTER v.: say.
 UTTERANCE: something said.

V

VACANTLY: thoughtlessly, with empty mind.
 VANITY: pride esp. of person or dress.
 VARY: change, alter.
 VAST: very large.
 VASTLY: much.
 VEGETATION: plants.
 VEHICLE: wheeled car, cart, etc., used for road transport.

- VEIL: 1. cloth worn to hide part of face. 2. take the veil: join a religious order and leave the world for a religious house.
- VELVET: heavy, rich cloth.
- VENGEANCE: revenge.
- VENTURE: dare.
- VEX: make angry.
- VEXATION: anger.
- VICE: wrongdoing, special kind of wickedness.
- VICTIM: one who suffers from some violent action.
- VIGOUR: power, strength, forcefulness.
- VIGOROUS(LY): forceful.
- VILE: evil.
- VINE: plant on which grow fruit from which wine is made.
- VIOLIN: musical instrument with four strings played with a bow.
- VIOLONCELLO: like violin but larger.
- VIRGIN: The Virgin: Mary the Mother of Jesus.
- VISIBLE: possible to see.
- VISION: 1. sense of sight. 2. thing seen with the mind's eye. 3. uncommonly beautiful sight.
- VISIONARY: existing in the mind alone.
- VOLUNTARY: done willingly.
- VOW n.: solemn promise.
- VULGAR: 1. common. 2. low and rude.

W

- WAGE WAR: fight against.
- WAIL v.: make a long, sad cry.
- WAISTCOAT: sleeveless garment worn under a short coat.
- WARRANT v.: used to give weight to what is said, like "surely," "certainly."
- WART: small, hard growth on skin.
- WAVER: move from side to side, hesitate.
- WEARY: tired.
- WEDDING: marriage ceremony.
- WEEP: cry, shed tears.
- WELFARE: well-being, advantage.
- WELL-CONDUCTED: well-behaved.
- WHENCE: from where.
- WHEREBY: by which.
- WHEREUPON: upon which, at which moment.
- WHINE: make a noise like an unhappy little dog, complain in a sad voice.
- WHIP v.: 1. beat with a whip. 2. move quickly.
- WHISKERS: hair growing on sides of face.
- WHITEWASH: chalk mixed with water to make walls white.
- WHITHER: where, to which place.
- WIG: false hair.
- WINDING SHEET: white cloth wrapped round dead body.
- WINK v.: 1. shut one eye, often as sign. 2. pretend not to see.
- WIT: 1. sense. 2. cleverness esp. at making people laugh.
- WITHDRAW: go back, go away, take s. back.

WITHER: dry up and die like a plant without water.

WITHOUT: outside.

WOO: make love to with a view to marriage

WORLDLY: concerning this world.

WORTHY n.: a person deserving respect (often used to mean the exact opposite).

WRATH: anger.

WRATHFUL(LY): angry.

WRENCH: pull and twist hard.

WRETCH: unhappy person.

WRETCHED: miserable.

WRING: twist, of hands: twist together as sign of sorrow.

WRINKLE: line on face, etc.

WRINKLED: covered with wrinkles.

WRITHE: twist and turn body in pain.

Y

YAWN: open mouth wide, sign of tiredness.

YOUNGSTER: child, young person.

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